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# NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL

## Monterey, California



## THESIS

**STUDY OF FACTORS AFFECTING THE RETENTION  
DECISIONS OF SEA-GOING FEMALE NAVAL AVIATORS  
AND NAVAL FLIGHT OFFICERS**

by

Traci A. Keegan

May 1999

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Gail F. Thomas

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This thesis seeks to discover the factors that are affecting the career decisions of female aviators and naval flight officers (NFOs) in sea-going aviation communities. Focused interviews were conducted with 21 female aviators/NFOs from various sea-going aviation communities. Analysis of the transcripts revealed 14 general themes. These themes covered topics, including the influence family members had on the interviewees' decision to join the military, the interviewees' commitment to serve their country, the lack of female role models in aviation, the gender discrimination the interviewees faced throughout their careers, and the interviewees' plans to leave the Navy after their initial obligation. The most surprising finding of the study was that 19 of 21 women interviewed said they planned to leave the Navy and that there was nothing the Navy could do to make them stay. Other findings indicated that many female naval aviators/NFOs struggle with the decision of whether to continue a career in naval aviation or resign due to their desire to have a husband and children, and female naval aviators/NFOs have no positive female role models. This thesis concludes with recommended courses of action and areas for further research in order to help personnel officials better understand the choices female officers are forced to make concerning their commitment to the Navy and to increase the retention rate of future female aviators/NFOs.

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**STUDY OF FACTORS AFFECTING THE RETENTION DECISIONS OF  
SEA-GOING FEMALE NAVAL AVIATORS AND NAVAL FLIGHT  
OFFICERS**

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Lieutenant, United States Navy  
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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of

**MASTER OF SCIENCE IN  
LEADERSHIP AND HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT**

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This thesis seeks to discover the factors that are affecting the career decisions of female aviators and naval flight officers (NFOs) in sea-going aviation communities. Focused interviews were conducted with 21 female aviators/NFOs from various sea-going aviation communities. Analysis of the transcripts revealed 14 general themes. These themes covered topics, including the influence family members had on the interviewees' decision to join the military, the interviewees' commitment to serve their country, the lack of female role models in aviation, the gender discrimination the interviewees faced throughout their careers, and the interviewees' plans to leave the Navy after their initial obligation. The most surprising finding of the study was that 19 of the 21 women interviewed said they planned to leave the Navy and that there was nothing the Navy could do to make them stay. Other findings indicated that many female naval aviators/NFOs struggle with the decision of whether to continue a career in naval aviation or resign due to their desire to have a husband and children, and female naval aviators/NFOs have no positive female role models. This thesis concludes with recommended courses of action and areas for further research in order to help personnel officials better understand the choices female officers are forced to make concerning their commitment to the Navy and to increase the retention rate of future female aviators/NFOs.

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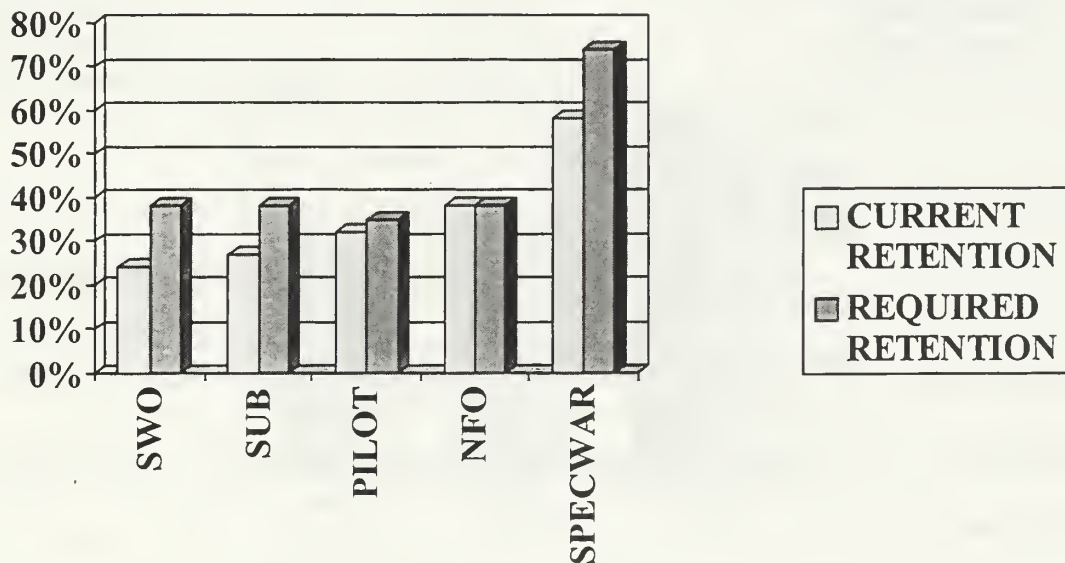


## I. INTRODUCTION

### A. BACKGROUND

Personnel retention in the Navy has been on a downward trend over the past few years. Current retention rates for the Unrestricted Line communities is significantly lower than the steady-state requirements for retaining personnel. (Bureau of Naval Personnel, 1998). Table 1 shows significant gaps between the current and required retention rates for the surface warfare, submarine, and special warfare communities.

**Table 1. FY-98 Unrestricted Line Officer Retention Requirements**

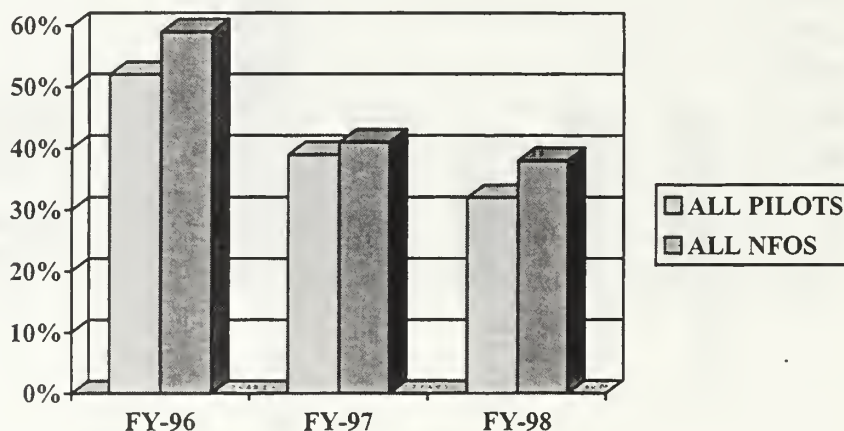


Source: Aviation Officer Community Manager, FY-1998

While the retention requirement does not appear problematic for pilots and NFOs, the data may, in fact, understate the current retention rate. Because of the scarcity of pilots and NFOs, the U.S. Navy has required some pilots and NFOs to delay resignations to complete shore tour orders beyond their initial obligations.

The Navy anticipates that retention numbers will continue to decrease. For instance, in the aviation community alone, there were 477 resignations for FY-96, 414 resignations for FY-97, 486 resignations for FY-98, and in the first quarter of FY-99 three have already been 145 resignations with an estimated total of 525 for all of FY-99. (See Table 2) The current estimated cost of training a pilot or NFO ranges from \$2 – \$5.5 million depending on the community. These figures are calculated from the start of flight school through a first fleet tour. With the number of resignations increasing and the high cost of training it is imperative that the Navy do something to retain these seasoned aviators beyond their initial obligation.

**Table 2. Percentage of Pilots and NFOs That Remained in the Navy Over the Past Three Years**



Source: Aviation Officer Community Manager, FY-1998

One strategy the Navy will use to combat the decrease is a bonus called the Aviation Career Continuation Pay (ACCP). The bonus is tied directly to sea duty and force structure to retain high quality career oriented aviators. It is applied at the critical retention points of an aviator's career and transitions to a "pull vs push" philosophy of

compensation. The thought is that paying more senior aviators not only rewards for increased responsibility and superior performance but also pulls junior aviators at that critical seven to nine year point to consider the Navy as a career. Table 3 shows the new ACCP payment schedule.

**Table 3. Aviation Career Continuation Pay (ACCP) Sea and Performance Based Incentive**

Tour	# Of Years Service	Incentive Pay
First Sea Tour	2-5 yrs	0
First Shore Tour	5-8 yrs	0
Second Sea or Subsequent Sea	8-10 yrs	10k/yr X 2 yrs
Operational Department Head Tour	10-13 yrs	Jet Pilot 20k/yr X 3 yrs Prop/Helo/NFO 12k/yr X 3 yrs
Second Shore Tour	13-16 yrs	0
Non-screen CDR	16-19 yrs	13k/yr X 2 yrs
CDR Command	16-19 yrs	15k/yr X 3 yrs
Post Command Commander	19-21 yrs	15k/yr X 2 yrs

Source: Aviation Officer Community Manager, FY-1998

With all warfare communities forecasting serious officer retention problems, the issue has become the focus of numerous articles. A January 1999 article in Proceedings points out that, "Since 1992, the size of the fleet has decreased by 31 percent, while operations tempo has increased by 26 percent. More than half the ships are at sea on any given day and a majority of those are forward deployed." "The people who are leaving cite more and more frequently that their primary reason is disappointment in the quality of leadership they are receiving." (Webb, 1999, p. 33)

Another article in Proceedings states that only one in ten junior officers aspired to be commanding officers. They felt that command does not look satisfying anymore. They do not see their commanding officers having fun, and the sacrifices, separation, and long hours no longer seem to carry the same rewards as they once did. (Natter, Lopez, and Hodges, 1998, p.59)

Regarding aviation, Command Naval Air Pacific recently conducted a survey in which all aviators and naval flight officers (NFOs) were invited to respond. (unpublished survey) A total of 1,053 persons responded to the survey. The preliminary survey results showed that the primary detractors of the Navy are intangibles that frequently outweigh the positives. These detractors consist of quality of life issues, family issues, spouses with careers, senior Navy and civilian leadership, hard fills, doing more with less, losing the warrior ethic/Esprit de Corps, and the zero-tolerance policies. Some other secondary detractors include questionable readiness, lack of flight time when not on cruise, poor or minimal training, and lack of parts for aircraft. The “bottom line” from the survey was that there is a genuine retention dilemma; and many personnel are disillusioned, while many others are “fence-sitters.” (Aviation Officer Community Manager)

Among the aviators and NFOs are a distinct group – the first set of combat female naval aviators and NFOs. In 1994 these pioneers entered the sacred domain of sea-going aviation which would for the first time ever afford them the opportunity to compete with their male counterparts for promotion. Currently, women make up about 4 % of the total number of sea-going aviators and NFOs. Approximately 220 female aviators/NFOs have been assigned to sea-going platforms and have been deployed at least once. After



five years, these women are entering a decision window as they complete their obligation to the U.S. Navy. Little is known about the factors that these women will consider in this decision process. These pioneer women represent a very unique group in naval aviation and little is known about them at this point. As previously noted, retention is on a downward trend across the board, so it may not be surprising to find that a large percentage of female aviators/NFOs also choose to leave the cockpit and take a job in the civilian sector.

## **B. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY**

This thesis seeks to discover the factors that are affecting the career decisions of female naval aviators/NFOs in sea-going aviation communities. Because little is known about them, this is an important and much needed look at women in this window. This information may be useful to Navy policy makers in their continuing effort to retain female naval aviators and NFOs. As the Navy faces the challenge of a dwindling aviation officer pool, it is possible that the issues of retention may be far more complicated for women than they are for men. It is equally important to identify the various factors that may complicate the issues.

## **C. SCOPE/METHODOLOGY**

This study uses qualitative research methods and inductive analysis to identify recurrent themes from interviews conducted with a sample of 21 female aviators/NFO's from various sea-going aviation communities. The interview protocol uses 20 questions to identify the factors and issues that affect the retention decisions of sea-going female

aviators/NFOs. The constant comparison method of data analysis is used to develop themes that are supported with quotes from the interview data.

#### **D. BENEFIT OF THE STUDY**

Since retention is becoming an increasing problem in the Navy, this topic is important to Department of Defense and Navy policy makers, especially the Officer Strength Planning Section, because a person's desire to retain or not, cannot be predicted. In fact, the actual number of pilots and NFOs across the board for all personnel pipelines is below the required level, and it is projected to stay that way into the year 2003. This thesis should provide valuable insight and information to assist the Department of the Navy in retaining female aviators/NFOs since it is important to have them in these and all positions in order to increase the diversity that is imperative in the Navy today. Additionally, it is hoped that this research will help personnel officials better understand the choices female officers are forced to make concerning their commitment to the Navy.

#### **E. ORGANIZATION OF THE THESIS**

This thesis uses an inductive research methodology to determine the factors that affect the intentions of sea-going female aviators/NFOs to leave or stay in the Navy. Chapter II presents the history of women in the military, the history of women in the Navy, and the history of women in Naval Aviation. Chapter III reviews the sample population, interview protocol, data collection procedures, and data analysis methodology. Chapter IV presents the themes developed from the data analysis. These themes are supported with specific quotes from the interview data. Finally, Chapter V

provides a summary, major conclusions, recommendations, and questions for additional research.

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## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

We are women of a breed whose racial ideal was no Helen of Troy, passed passively from male hand to male hand....We are of a race of women that of old knew no fear, and feared no death, and lived great lives and hoped great hopes; and if today some of us have fallen on evil and degenerate times, there moves in us yet the throb of the old blood.

Olive Schreiner, 1911

### A. OVERVIEW

From the earliest days, women warriors have been able to take the field and wield the weapons of their day. They have served as captains, generals, and commanders in chief, and they have fought in the front lines of infantry with shock troops and have charged with the cavalry. They have fought for the same things that men have fought for, what humans fight for, the defense of their homes and country, protection of their family, the righting of wrongs, adventure, and even lust for power. Thus, according to Jones, women can share equally with men in the title of “warrior.” (Jones, 1997).

As of September 30, 1998, there were 195,654 women in the active duty military (excluding the Coast Guard, which in peacetime is a part of the Department of Transportation). Of these women, 164,663 are enlisted personnel and 30,991 are officers. (Women’s Research and Education Institute, (WREI), 1998). These numbers indicate that women accounted for about 14 percent of the armed forces population in 1998. The proportion of women in the military is considerably higher than the 2 percent at the start of the All-Volunteer Force in 1973. The growth in participation by women has come slowly, in the view of some. In fact, for years, women have fought to earn their place as warriors in the U.S. military.



In the following chapter, the history of women in the military is presented as well as a history of women in the Navy and women in naval aviation. It is important to review this history, first, to understand the progress and perspectives of women in today's military.

## **B. WOMEN IN THE MILITARY: A BRIEF HISTORY AND CHRONOLOGY**

The story of women in the U.S. military begins with the birth of the nation. In fact, in 1778 John Hays' gun position ceased firing. Mary, John's wife, found the crew lying mutilated and John seriously wounded. Although not trained in the art of war, she put down her water pitcher, grabbed the ramming staff, swabbed out the hot gun barrel with water to extinguish sparks and remove unexploded powder, rammed home a charge and fired. Replacements soon arrived, but she stayed at her station as rammer until relieved by an artilleryman. (Holm, 1992)

Even though it is known that women served with armies in battle during the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, it is difficult to document what they did due to the loss of many of the early records. There is some evidence, however, that women were employed by the military during the Revolutionary War. (Devilbiss, 1990) Table 3 shows the number of women who have served in selected U.S. military actions from 1898 to March 1997.

### **1. American Revolution**

During the American Revolution, women participated in the military as "women of the army." They were a distinct branch of the Continental Army, who performed duties with artillery units on the battlefield and served as medics both in the field and in

**Table 4. Number of Women Who Served in Selected U.S. Military Actions 1898 to March 1997**

Action	Number of Women*
Spanish-American War	1,500
World War I	33,000
World War II	400,000
Korea	120,000
Vietnam	7,000
Grenada	170
Panama	770
Desert Storm	41,000
Somalia	1,000
Haiti	1,200
Bosnia	5,000

\*The numbers are not strictly comparable. Numbers for the Spanish-American War, both World Wars, and the Korean War include all women on active duty during those eras. The number for the Vietnam War includes only women who served in theater – i.e., those eligible to wear Vietnam Campaign Service medals. The numbers for military actions in Grenada, Panama, and the Persian Gulf and the peacekeeping actions in Somalia, Haiti, and Bosnia include only women (both active duty and reserve) who deployed to these areas during the action. Numbers for Bosnia are as of March 1997.

Sources: Department of Defense, Veterans Administration, and *Women in Military Service for America*, 1997, *Women in the Military: Where They Stand*, WREI, 1998.

military hospitals. During this time, women also served as regular troops fighting in uniform side-by-side with male Continentals. Some served disguised as men while others who fought as regular soldiers, made no effort to hide their sex. In fact, they fought in combat, and drew pay, rations, and pensions under their own names. Finally, during this time, women served as irregular fighters affiliated with local militia companies. The militia units were often partly or entirely composed of women and were employed as local defense forces. It is important to note that, during this time, even though women may or may not have been paid for the duties they performed, they did not

hold military rank and were therefore attached to, and not a part of the armed forces. (Devilbiss, 1990)

## **2. The War of 1812**

During the War of 1812, women were employed by the military as scouts and some were also attached to frontier outposts. As Jones (1999) finds, however, the War of 1812 was mainly a naval war, so all women were limited in what they could do.

## **3. The Civil War**

During the Civil War, some women acted as saboteurs, couriers, and spies while others performed combat support duties such as cooking, laundering, supplying ammunition on the battlefield, and performing camp maintenance. Still others, disguised as men, served in the army and fought in combat. The single most influential contribution that women made at this time, however, was in the field of health care. In fact, death due to disease accounted for a far greater proportion of mortality in the war than death due to wounds and injury, therefore, making caring for the sick and injured as much a risk to one's health as the war itself. It was also at this time that these women obtained permission to convert transport ships into the first primitive hospital ships to care for the wounded. Despite all of their accomplishments, when the war ended in 1865, the Army once again used their enlisted men for patient care and the female care-givers went home. (Devilbiss, 1990)

#### **4. The Spanish-American War**

Due to an epidemic of typhoid fever among U.S. troops, women nurses were given an opportunity to serve during the Spanish-American War because the military could not recruit enough male medical corpsmen. At the request of the Surgeon General, Congress authorized the military to appoint women as nurses, but only as civilian workers, not as uniformed members of the force. Between 1898 and 1901, approximately 1,500 women served in the United States, overseas, and aboard the hospital ship Relief. (Holm, 1992)

These women were so successful that Congress established the Army Nurse Corps in 1901 and the Navy Nurse Corps in 1908. However, the women had no military rank, equal pay, or other benefits of military service such as retirement or veterans benefits. (Devilbiss, 1990)

#### **5. World War I**

During World War I, The Navy was the first service to recruit women for non-nursing roles. Women were recruited as “Yeomanettes,” and served principally in clerical and communications assignments. In fact, 12,500 yeomen women and 305 women Marines served in the Navy and Marine Corps during the war. (Devilbiss, 1990) At the same time, the Army did not recruit women other than nurses, but it did hire approximately 200 bilingual women to be telephone operators with an American Expeditionary Force in France. (WREI, 1998)

By the end of World War I, the Army Nurse Corps had expanded from 400 to 20,000 and the Navy Nurse Corps from 460 to 1,400. (Holm, 1992) Even though

women served in various capacities during World War I, the services were quick to return them to civilian status as soon as the war ended.

## **6. World War II**

As World War II grew more imminent, it was apparent to the armed forces that that they were headed for a manpower crisis of unprecedented proportions. In 1942, Public Law 554 established the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps (WAAC). WAAC was a small group of women attached to, but not in, the Army. In 1942, Public Law 689 established the Navy Women's Reserve and the Women Marines. In the Navy and the Marines, women were part of the Reserves and not a separate "women's corps" as in the Army's WAAC. In 1943, Congress passed a bill that established the Women's Army Corps (WAC), whose members had full military status. (Devilbliss, 1990)

The records of World War II are full of testimonials to the great contributions made by women, their disciplined characters, and their overall positive effect on all the services. If there was one complaint common to all of the services, it was that the number of women could have been expanded. At the war's end, of the 12 million people in the U.S. Armed Forces, nearly 280,000 were women. All together, 350,000 women had actually served in the military. (Holm, 1992)

## **7. Integration Through the Seventies**

On June 12, 1948, Public Law 625, the Women's Armed Services Integration Act (part of Title 10 USC) was passed. The law established, for the first time, a permanent role for women in the nation's armed forces. This meant that women would never again



be mobilized and then immediately discharged following a war or crisis while men continued to serve at all times. Nevertheless, women could not constitute more than two percent of the total regular force. (Devilbiss, 1990)

Additionally, women officers were limited in the ability to obtain a pay grade above O-3, and O-5 was the highest permanent rank women could obtain. Some women could be temporarily promoted to the rank of O-6 to serve as directors of the women's branches. However, women were barred from serving aboard Navy vessels except for hospital ships and transports, and they were barred from duty in aircraft engaged in combat missions. (WREI, 1998)

Throughout the 1950s, the military continued to mirror the culture of white middle-class America, in which women's roles were restricted and subordinate to those of men. Women were defined as wives and stay-at-home mothers, with little political influence and a narrow range of activity. Women in the military were definitely outside the mainstream of American society. (Dean, 1997)

In 1951, the Defense Advisory Committee on Women in the Services (DACOWITS) was established to help address the pressing personnel needs during the Korean War, to help the services recruit more women, and to serve as a public relations vehicle for women's programs. In fact, the President appointed 50 women from business, public service professions, and civilian leadership to form DACOWITS. Furthermore, it was partly due to the efforts of DACOWITS members in 1967 that legislative relief came about for military women from some of the promotion restrictions of the 1948 Integration Act. (Devilbiss, 1990)

In November 1967, Public Law 90-130 was signed by President Lyndon B. Johnson to amend titles 10, 32, and 27, United States Code. This law removed restrictions on the careers of female officers in the Army, Navy, Air Force, and Marine Corps. (Holm, 1992) At this time, the two percent ceiling on the number of women allowed to serve in the regular active force was removed, the caps on officer promotions above O-3 were removed, women became eligible for permanent promotion to pay grade O-6, and women also became eligible for appointment to flag/general officer rank. (WREI, 1998)

American military involvement in Vietnam included the utilization of women during the 1960s and 1970s. Most of the women who saw service in Southeast Asia during this time were nurses, although there were some women in the line components who served there as well. Although the exact numbers are unknown, approximately 7,500 American military women served in Southeast Asia during the Vietnam War. Some of these women returned with decorations, some returned with wounds, and some did not return at all. (Devilbiss, 1990)

The seventies are often considered a revolutionary time for military women because a number of significant changes in policies relating to women occurred during the decade. In fact, in 1971, the Air Force became the first service to grant waivers to pregnant women for the automatic discharge policy and to allow the enlistment of women with children. In 1972, the Supreme Court declared that women had to be treated equally with respect to dependent's benefits. Prior to this, husbands had to be 50 percent

dependent on servicewomen for support to receive benefits, while servicemen were not required to prove their wives' financial dependence. (WREI, 1998)

In 1973, the era of the All-Volunteer Force began and the draft ended. Subsequently, the goals for women's recruitment into the armed forces started to increase and the Navy winged its first female aviators. Congress repealed Title 14 USC Section 762, which removed the difference between men's and women's reserves and allowed women to serve in the regular Coast Guard. This change also removed the combat exclusion provisions for Coast Guard women. In 1974, the Army winged its first women aviators. (WREI, 1998)

In 1976, big changes came when President Gerald Ford signed PL 94-106. This law allowed women to enter the nation's three military academies for the first time. The legislation took effect in the fall of 1976, making the class of 1980 the first gender-integrated group of academy graduates. (Devilbiss, 1990)

In 1977, the Air Force winged its first women aviators. In 1978, the Coast Guard removed all assignment restrictions based on gender, and a U.S. district court ruled that Title 10 USC Section 6015 was unconstitutional. This ruling by the court led to the permanent assignment of women to noncombatant ships and temporary assignment to any ship not expected to have a combat mission. Another outcome was the Navy's Women in Ships program, which resulted in Surface Warfare and Special Operations billets being opened to women officers. (WREI, 1998)

## 8. The Eighties

In 1980, Congress enacted the Defense Manpower Personnel Management Act (DOPMA), and changed the laws that once required separate appointment, promotion, accounting, and separation procedures for women officers. This led to women being able to compete for the selection to flag/general officer rank. (WREI, 1998)

Even though growth was dramatic in the proportions of women admitted to the military, by the early 1980s, women still made up fewer than one in ten military members and were still mostly concentrated in the jobs considered “traditional” to their gender. Furthermore, the issue of women in the military continued to generate tension and open conflict between appointed civilian officials and military leaders. In fact, the closer women got to the services’ primary mission elements, the stiffer seemed the resistance of some generals and admirals. For the most part, women found themselves caught in the middle of the debates, feeling like pawns in a political game with no say in the outcome. (Holm, 1992)

In 1983, the U.S. invaded Grenada in Operation Urgent Fury, and 170 women soldiers and Air Force women in air transport crews participated. It was also in 1983 that Air Force women served as crew-members aboard KC-135 and KC-10 tanker aircraft during the raid on Libya. In 1988, 30,000 new positions were opened to women when the Department of Defense published its “Risk Rule,” which set a single standard for evaluating military positions and units that excluded women. And, finally, in 1989, 770 women were deployed to Panama (600 women were already in country) in support of Operation Just Cause, where a woman Military Policeman commanded troops in a



firefight operation and three female Black Hawk pilots were awarded the Air Medal when their helicopters came under fire. (WREI, 1998)

## 9. The Nineties

In the previous decades, many important changes occurred regarding the role of women in the military. Yet, none of these changes can compare to those that have been brought about in the nineties. In 1990/1991, many assumptions about women's limitations with respect to combat were shattered when nearly 41,000 military women were deployed to the Gulf Theater in support of Operation Desert Storm. Of these 41,000, thirteen women were killed and two were taken prisoner of war. (WREI, 1998) Table 5 shows the breakdown by service.

**Table 5. Military Women in the Operation Desert Storm, by Service, 1991**

Service	Number	% of Total Personnel Deployed
Army	30,855	9.7
Navy	4,449	4.2
Air Force	4,246	7.0
Marine Corps	<u>1,232</u>	<u>1.5</u>
All DOD	40,782	7.2

Source: Department of Defense. *Women in the Military*, 1992, Holm.

By the end of the war, it was apparent that the combat exclusion laws and policies would be challenged by Congress. In fact, women's participation in Desert Storm led the way for the approval of the 1992/1993 Kennedy-Roth Amendment to the defense department authorization bill, which repealed the provisions of 10 USC that barred women from flying aircraft in combat missions. (WREI, 1998)



In 1993, Secretary of Defense Les Aspin ordered all services to open combat aviation to women. He also directed the Navy to draft legislation to repeal the combat ship exclusion, and directed the Army and Marine Corps to study opening new assignments to women. Subsequently, in 1994, 32,700 Army positions and 48,000 Marine Corps positions were opened to women when the DOD Risk Rule was rescinded. At the same time, most Navy combatant ships were opened to women, and over 1,000 women were assigned to U.S. military operations in Somalia. In 1995, over 1,200 women were deployed to Haiti for peacekeeping duties, and the Marines winged their first female aviators. Further, over 5,000 women were deployed to Bosnia for peacekeeping operations between 1997 and 1998. (WREI, 1998) The figures in Table 6 indicate the percentages of positions and occupations open to active duty women by branch as of 1997.

## **C. WOMEN IN THE U.S. NAVY: A BRIEF HISTORY AND CHRONOLOGY**

### **1. World War I**

Women have served the Navy unofficially since it was formed as the married partners of personnel. But not until the World War I did the Navy officially employ women to do a job (Ebbert and Hall, 1993). According to WREI 1998, the Navy was the first service to recruit women for non-nursing roles. In fact, they served throughout the First World War in secretarial and communication roles as “Yeomanettes.” It should be noted, however, that all Yeomanettes were released to inactive duty when the war ended.

**Table 6. Percentage of Positions and Occupations Open to Active-Duty Women, by Service, 1997**

Service	%
<b>ARMY</b>	
Positions	70
Occupations	91
<b>NAVY</b>	
Positions	94
Occupations	96
<b>MARINE CORPS</b>	
Positions	62
Occupations	93
<b>AIR FORCE</b>	
Positions	99
Occupations	99
<b>COAST GUARD</b>	
Positions	100
Occupations	100

Source: U.S. Department of Defense, Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense, Public Affairs News Release No. 449-94, July 29, 1994, *Women in the Military: Where They Stand*, WREI, 1998.

## 2. World War II

Little did the Navy know, but another war would bring about the same need for women. Nevertheless, the Navy was still reluctant to recruit women. In fact, during the congressional debate over the creation of the women's Army Air Corps (WAAC) bill, the Navy sat and watched. With the exception of the Bureau of Aeronautics, the higher levels of the Navy were somewhat less enthused with the whole idea. In December of 1941, the Army asked the Navy to support a joint bill to provide auxiliaries in both services; however, the Navy could not go along and even tried to persuade the War Department not to sponsor the WAAC bill. (Holm, 1992)

By mid-1941, the Navy came to the realization that it, too, would have a manpower problem if the United States were drawn into the war. It was actually the Bureau of Aeronautics that proposed military women be used and recommended that legislation be introduced to permit it. (Holm, 1992)

On July 30, 1942, PL 689 established the Women's Reserve of the Navy (WR). It was added as Title V to the Naval Reserve Act of 1938 and shaped the WR according to the Navy's wishes while also reflecting congressional pressures and concerns. The law established the WR as a branch of the Naval Reserve, and it made clear that the women were actually a part of the Naval Reserve, not just serving with it. The Navy department had broad latitude to modify and interpret which provisions of the act would or would not apply to female reservists. These women were identified as WAVES, Women Accepted for Volunteer Emergency Service. (Ebbert and Hall, 1993)

The following quote was from a speech given by Lieutenant Commnader Mildred McAfee when she accepted command of the Waves on August 3, 1942:

I have been offered a high honor and a great responsibility. As an individual I should not venture to accept either. I do, however, accept the honor on behalf of the colleges of America. They have shown themselves to be agencies of importance in the American scene, if academic administrative experience is considered of value to the Navy. I accept the responsibility as a representative of the women of America who welcome each new opportunity to render service to the nation.

The WAVES are only one group of women who are trying to serve the nation through helping the Navy. They join the navy nurses , the navy wives, the civilian employees as volunteers asking to be called upon for hard work and the privilege of service.

- Lieutenant Commander Mildred McAfee (Ross, 1943)

Since the Navy was required to take women, it was determined to get the best that it could possibly find. By June of 1942, some of the most accomplished women in the nation were being called to become naval officers. Many of the candidates were educators, lawyers, engineering draftsmen, and many came from the business world. These women were exactly what the Navy needed: women who had all made their place in a male-dominated world. (Ebbert and Hall, 1993)

As is to be expected, the first WAVE officers faced many difficulties and challenges. Some of those difficulties involved simply the fact that they were the first, and people were curious. Other difficulties involved resentment from the men with whom they worked, especially those who did not want to go to sea. (Ebbert and Hall, 1993)

In the summer of 1945, there were nearly 86,000 WAVES and 11,000 Navy nurses. It was assumed that all but a few hundred nurses would have to be discharged and that the women's line components would be completely disbanded. Although the drafting of men continued, recruiting for women came to a grinding halt. (Holm, 1992)

Finally, in August of 1946, the last contingent of WAVES returned to the United States and were demobilized. The Navy and the women in the WAVES had benefited greatly from the wartime experience of the WR. The Navy learned that it could recruit and train large numbers of women rapidly, and employ them in many more fields than originally expected. Furthermore, women's presence in the Navy impelled the Navy to improve the quality of life on naval bases, which resulted in benefits for men as well as women. (Ebbert and Hall, 1993)



### **3. Integration Through the Seventies**

In 1948, the Women's Services Integration Act was passed and the wartime Navy Women's Reserve was disestablished. However, the term WAVES continued to be used and the senior Navy woman continued to be called the WAVE director. (Dean, 1997)

It was also in 1948 that six enlisted women joined the branches of the Navy where WAVES had served in the greatest number and made the most significant contributions. Those branches included nontraditional jobs in aviation, clerical work, communications, storekeeping, disbursing, and hospital corpsmen. Of the women officers who remained on active duty, nearly 300 were selected to be commissioned in the regular Navy. As with the enlisted women, the first eight officers also represented major areas such as aviation, personnel, supply, and medical. Finally, recruiting for women with no prior Navy experience began in September of 1948. Only three weeks after recruiting began, the first class of 320 women recruits reported for training. (Ebbert and Hall, 1993)

By the middle of 1950, the Korean War broke out, and after much recruiting effort, the number of Navy women on active duty nearly doubled by July 1951, from 3,240 to 6,300. A year later, the number had increased again by a third to 8,340; and, by cease-fire in 1953, nearly 9,000 Navy women were serving on active duty. Overall, the services failed to reach their recruiting goals for women in the Korean emergency, which brought about two lasting changes. The Navy would no longer allow married women to leave the service upon request, and the minimum age for enlistment was dropped from 20 to 18. (Ebbert and Hall, 1993)



The period from 1953 to 1963 was bleak for Navy women in many ways. Opportunities to enter technical fields were far fewer than in World War II, promotions were slow, and policies discouraged married women from continuing on active duty while all but prohibiting mothers from serving. Little by little, the number of Navy women who married and remained in service grew, which caused the Navy to reexamine its policies regarding civilian husbands of Navy women. The question was: should they be granted the same privileges as civilian wives of Navy men and be considered dependents, which would give them the benefit of free medical care, shopping at the Navy exchange and commissary, and eligibility for the couple to occupy government housing? (Ebbert and Hall, 1993)

Other issues of concern for Navy women at the time involved marriage to civilian men: would the civilian husband be willing or able to relocate with his Navy wife? If the servicewoman married a serviceman, would the Navy give them orders together? Should the woman marry at all and give up a career that she loved and in which she was doing well? If she married, should she try to maintain the career and thereby risk prolonged separation? And, finally, if she did stay in the military, could she face giving up motherhood altogether? (Ebbert and Hall, 1993)

Before 1953, nurses were the only Navy women who were allowed to serve on ships. But, in September of 1953, 63 women corpsmen reported for sea duty. The armed forces and the public accepted the idea of these women serving on ships or close to the battlefield as long as they were providing health care and nothing else. (Ebbert and Hall, 1993)

As the United States entered the Vietnam War, nearly all Navy women played their usual role. They took over jobs that allowed Navy men to be released to fight the war in Southeast Asia. Only nine women line officers served in Vietnam. However, extreme manpower shortages during the war led DOD to reexamine its policies on women. (Ebbert and Hall, 1993)

In October 1965, the hospital ship USS Repose was commissioned and 29 female Navy nurses reported for duty. Only a year later, the USS Sanctuary was recommissioned and 29 more female Navy nurses reported for duty to handle casualties offshore. (Holm, 1992)

During this time, Navy women were limited in the numbers who could serve on active duty above the grade of lieutenant. Promotion vacancies had been reduced to a point that forced the discharge of most female line officers as they reached their thirteenth year of service. Because they could not serve out their 20 years, they had no retirement option. (Holm, 1992)

Furthermore, in 1966, the Navy estimated that without some sort of legislative relief, the forced attrition of WAVE lieutenants would average 50 percent or more over the next five years, and promotions to commander for the next four or five years would be suspended. Women reservists began to think twice about augmenting into the Regular Navy because there was no future in it. Finally, in 1967, PL 90-130 was passed and career opportunities for women were improved. (Holm, 1992)

In 1970, Admiral Zumwalt became the Chief of Naval Operations. He visualized the imminent passage of the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) and, therefore, his position

was to initiate a variety of administrative actions that would enable the Navy to make full use of women promptly when ERA or statutes liberalizing the terms of female service became law. The following actions were taken:

1. Enlisted women were authorized limited entry to all ratings.
2. Under a pilot program, a limited number of officer and enlisted women were assigned to ship's company of USS Sanctuary.
3. Restrictions were suspended regarding women succeeding to command ashore.
4. Applications were accepted from women officers for the Chaplain and Civil Engineer Corps.
5. The assignment of technically qualified unrestricted line women to restricted line billets was expanded.
6. Various paths to progression to flag rank within the technical, managerial spectrum were offered.
7. Unrestricted women officers were assigned to their cognizant grade detailers.
8. Opportunity for women's professional growth was increased.
9. Selection criteria of naval training was equalized by opening midshipmen programs to women through NROTC and considering women for selection to joint colleges. (p. 263-264)

Of these directives, the only one that attracted much public notice was sending women to sea on the hospital ship USS Sanctuary. (Zumwalt, 1976)

By 1978, few vestiges of the original women's units remained. Even the acronyms, WAC, WAVES, and WAF had been unceremoniously retired in the name of equality and integration. For the first time since 1942, women were on their own. The first service to abolish the women's support structure was the Navy. In fact, the desks that had once handled women's actions in the Bureau of Naval Personnel were being absorbed into the appropriate offices and the office of the Assistant for Women was consigned to the deep. (Holm, 1992)

In 1978, the Navy initiated its Women in Ships Program and, as a result, Surface Warfare and Special Operations were open to women officers. At the same time, enlisted women became eligible for assignment aboard ships. (WREI, 1998)

#### **4. The Eighties and Nineties**

With the Eighties came many new issues for women in the Navy. Issues included family policies involving collocation, dependent husbands, motherhood, and child-care, as well as those involving fraternization, and sexual harassment.

In 1980, the Navy had about 6,500 couples consisting of two Navy members. About 95 percent of these were assigned to jobs in the same general area. In 1982, the Navy made collocation of joint service couples its official policy. By 1982, pregnant women were allowed to stay on active duty and some were even be required to stay if they had received educational benefits or had incurred obligated service for flight training or medical residency. Further, women with critical skills were also be retained. In 1987, the Navy said that pregnancy would not be accepted as a reason to release a woman from service. (Ebbert and Hall, 1993)

By 1982, the child-care issue had caught some attention and was a major issue for the Navy. In 1985, the Navy announced that all parents were obligated to file a certificate designating a custodian who would assume responsibility for their children when they deployed or when they were temporarily assigned to another duty station or a base lacking child-care facilities. By 1989, the Navy proposed to spend \$17.5 million over two years to build 12 more child-care centers, and at least 16 more between 1990 and 1994. (Ebbert and Hall, 1993)



In 1983, senior officers of U.S. Navy forces in Europe found inconsistent treatment of some fraternization cases and tried to write a statement of policy to clarify the situation. The statement was not accepted by higher authority in Washington because they thought it was unnecessary. However, events of the next few years indicated that the European commanders may have judged the situation much more clearly than their seniors. (Maze, 1983) Finally, in 1989, the Navy issued its guidelines on fraternization. The Navy defined fraternization as any personal relationship between an officer and an enlisted member, or within either group, that is “unduly familiar and does not respect differences in rank and grade where a senior-junior supervisory relationship exists.” (Ebbert and Hall, 1993)

In 1980, the Navy declared a formal policy against sexual harassment. Ten years later, in 1990, sexual harassment became an offense formalized in article 1166 of Navy regulations. (Ebbert and Hall, 1993)

By 1983, enlisted women were still found mostly in a third of the Navy’s ratings, such as administrative, medical, and dental fields. In 1988, during an effort to recruit women with technical skills or aptitude, Navy recruiters ensured women that they would be competitive for advancement. The recruiters even guaranteed them initial technical training after boot camp, which, in turn, ensured they would be competitive for advancement. By 1990, the Navy reported that more than 42,000 women were serving in nontraditional ratings, or more than 60 percent of all rated women. (Ebbert and Hall, 1993)



By the end of the Seventies, the Navy did not have enough men with the appropriate technical ratings to man its ships. Once again, the Navy needed to put women in its noncombatant ships to free men to serve in the combatants. Between 1981 and 1990, the number of enlisted women actually put on ships quadrupled from about 2,000 to nearly 8,000. Also beginning in 1980, enlisted women had the opportunity to pursue the special qualifications of surface warfare. (Ebbert and Hall, 1993)

In the 1980s, training began for the first women to become fully qualified as surface warfare officers (SWOs). It was a particularly frustrating time for them, because the ships they were assigned to did most of their work from port with little opportunity for experience in seamanship and warfighting at sea. Furthermore, the career paths of these women were very different from those of their male contemporaries due to a lack of experience at sea. In 1987, the Navy reported that only 40 of 131 women who had qualified as SWOs remained. Fifty-six returned to the General Unrestricted Line or some other non-operational community and 35 resigned from the Navy. The most-cited reason for leaving was lack of a clear career path and the desire to have a family. However, in 1990, the number of ships in which women were serving totaled 70, and 37 of these ships were assigned to the Military Sealift Command. Women SWOs finally had a brighter outlook, their command opportunities were excellent, their opportunities for promotion compared well with those of men and their retention rate increased. (Ebbert and Hall, 1993)

A further development in the Nineties for the Navy included legislation to repeal restrictions on the assignment of women to a combatant ship passed in 1994 and opened

most Navy combatant ships to women, as well as opening combat aviation to women. (WREI, 1998)

On February 4, 1994, the Navy gave Congress the required thirty-day notification that it intended to assign women to combatant ships and announced that eight combatants would receive women that year. Of these, three were carriers, three were destroyers, and two were dock landing ships. On March 6, the Navy permanently assigned the first large group of women to the aircraft carrier, USS Eisenhower. Fifteen of the women were officers, 33 were chief petty officers, and 15 were petty officers. A little more than half of the women were assigned to ship's company, and the rest went to aviation squadrons scheduled to deploy as part of the Eisenhower's embarked air wing. (Ebbert and Hall, 1993)

#### **D. WOMEN IN NAVAL AVIATION: A BRIEF HISTORY AND CHRONOLOGY**

The WAVES during World War II served in many capacities. At the end of the war, the list of aviation officer billets for women included aerological engineering, aeronautical engineering, air combat information, air-navigation gunnery instructor, air transportation, assembly and repair vocational training, celestial navigation (air navigation), flight desk, flight records, link training, photographic interpretation, recognition, recognition and gunners, radio-radar, schedules, and air traffic control. The enlisted women served as aerographer's mate (for both aircraft and instruments), aviation metalsmith, parachute rigger, radioman, aviation free gunnery instructor, navigational aids instructor, aviation electronic technician's mate, aviation ordnanceman, control

tower operator, and transport airman. Women in the WAVES were not permitted to fly aircraft as pilots. Nevertheless, 100 women officers trained as navigation instructors and the women who served as non-combat crew members did receive 50 hours of flight time. (Douglas, 1990)

For almost 30 years after World War II, very few women served in naval aviation units, and the extensive contributions women made to Navy air were mostly forgotten. In October 1972, Secretary of the Navy, John Warner announced that naval aviation training would be open to women, but he was quick to note that women would not likely be flying fighters; and these “girls” who were up to it could possibly fly transports, helicopters, and other types of aircraft. In fact, Warner was referring to non-combat aviation. (Ebbert and Hall, 1993)

The Navy opened aviation training to women to promote equal rights and opportunities for women throughout the service, and to see how women would perform as non-combat pilots. This suggested that the Navy might soon need women due to the challenge of retaining male pilots on active duty. With commercial airlines usually eager to lure Navy pilots out of service with offers of less time away from home, more money, and more safety, women eager to become Navy pilots could fill the expected vacancies. (Ebbert and Hall, 1993)

Of the first 26 women officers who applied to Navy flight training, only four were found qualified. In March of 1973, these four women reported to Pensacola, FL to begin flight training. At the same time, four civilian women reported to Officer Candidate School (OCS), with orders to enter flight training after graduation. Approximately one

year later, six of the first women selected received their wings. Of the six, two flew helicopters, two went to transport planes, one flew hurricanes, and the last went into utility flying. In 1975, the Navy authorized a second group of eight women to enter flight training, and six received their wings. Then, in 1976, the Navy took another big step and allowed women to report directly to Aviation Officer Training School in Pensacola, which had previously only been opened to men. Six women graduated and three went on to be pilots, while the other three went into aviation specialties previously closed to women. Two of the final three became the first female air intelligence officers, and one became the first female aviation maintenance duty officer. (Ebbert and Hall, 1993)

When women joined their first squadrons, they were met with surprise, skepticism, and some resentment by their male colleagues. In fact, the admiral in charge of advanced aviation training refused to pin wings onto the first women who finished flight training. Instead, another admiral had to be sent down to perform the ceremony. The men of Naval aviation, however, soon learned that their female counterparts were capable. (Ebbert and Hall, 1993)

It was apparent that naval aviation was becoming more accepting of women when the first female aviator became pregnant. The only concern in the aviation community was how long the woman could fly into her pregnancy. No one seemed to care as long as the pregnancy did not interfere with control of the aircraft, either physically or psychologically. One of the woman's senior officers even said that the overall impact of her pregnancy on the squadron was "positive." Once she could not fly any longer, her peers welcomed the extra flight time and her continued attention to some other important



special projects was greatly appreciated. After her child was born, her husband gave up his Navy career to become a schoolteacher which allowed her to continue on active duty. (Ebbert and Hall, 1993)

During this time, women made great strides in the field of aviation; however, the inconsistency and unreasonableness of the restrictions imposed by law continued to frustrate Navy female aviators. But the opportunities for women began to expand after 1978. Even though they could not be permanently assigned to aircraft carriers they could be embarked for up to 180 days on any ship not expected to be engaged in hostilities during that time. This new access to carriers allowed female pilots the ability to prove that they could land on carriers. In 1981, the Navy opened the jet pipeline to women, but only five women could enter each year. These women had to first apply for a slot after completing the propeller syllabus with high grades and the receipt of their wings, and then they were still not allowed to land on a carrier deck. (Ebbert and Hall, 1993)

Women aviators who did achieve a carrier qualification became eligible to work in squadrons that carried people, mail, and cargo to carriers at sea, and some did so. Furthermore, in 1983, women helicopter pilots were assigned to support ships operating with its forward-deployed fleets. But, even as late as 1989, some women helicopter pilots were kept off of the same ships that their male peers were landing on because fleet commanders were interpreting the policy in different ways. In fact, fleet commanders generally tended to err on the restrictive side. Test piloting was also opened to women, and, in 1983, the first woman graduated from the Navy Test Pilot School at Patuxent River. (Ebbert and Hall, 1993)



Due to the large success of female aviators, women officers were able to enter other fields in aviation. At the time women were entering the flight program, NFOs were known as observers, bombardiers, navigators, or intelligence specialists. Today, the physical qualifications for NFOs are nearly as rigorous as those for pilots, and the training calls for the same degree of technical ability. (Ebbert and Hall, 1993)

In 1981, the first female NFO was named after completing 600 hours of instruction during a six-month period. She was assigned as a navigator on C-130 Hercules aircraft flying with Operation Deep Freeze in the Antarctic. (Ebbert and Hall, 1993)

Although the Navy's policies were less restrictive than those of the Air Force, with respect to the types of aircraft open to women, opportunities to fly in the Navy were not much better overall, because of the constraints imposed by the legislative ban against having women on combat ships. Carriers are the center of Naval aviation and the Navy's flying requirements are geared to the demands of carrier life. Even though women were routinely flying off the decks of carriers, they could not be permanently assigned to the air group aboard, with the exception of the training carrier USS Lexington. (Holm, 1992)

By 1991, the Navy had 173 female pilots and 80 female NFOs on active duty, and the number of women taken into flight training each year had grown to 52 pilots and 15 NFOs. At this point, however, the Navy still did not allow women to fly in combat squadrons, which put them at a disadvantage as they competed with their male peers for promotions. Further, the "Tailhook" incident that occurred in the fall of 1991 revealed that some male aviators lacked respect for their female peers. (Ebbert and Hall, 1993)

Of the approximate 2,500 Navy women who took part in Operation Desert Shield and Desert Storm, only a handful of women in naval aviation participated. Most of the female aviators were from helicopter combat-support squadrons, and their wartime duties were basically the same as in peacetime. Their main jobs were replenishment and search and rescue, which they performed in a combat zone. However, the Gulf War became a turning point for women in the Navy. In fact, for the first time, women were in operational squadrons, exposed to hostile fire, and it seemed that the American public became aware that, like men, women must go wherever ordered, even into a combat zone. This brought the question of women in combat into plain view. (Ebbert and Hall, 1993)

In April of 1993, the Secretary of Defense ordered the service chiefs to drop restrictions that prevented women from flying combat missions. Shortly after that, Congress allowed Navy women permanent assignment to combatant ships. This was the last barrier keeping women out of squadrons that flew combat missions off aircraft carriers. Finally, by April of 1994, more than 60 female pilots and NFOs received orders to combat squadrons. (Ebbert and Hall, 1993)

Reactions to opening combat aircraft to women in the Navy were mixed. The women feared that quotas would lead to lower standards, which would cheapen their accomplishments and negatively affect their acceptance. When the Navy opened combatant units to women, however, it made the burden of deployment more equitable between men and women. (Ebbert and Hall, 1993)

## **E. SUMMARY**

As of 1999, women make up about 14 percent of Navy personnel, including approximately 49,110 women on active duty. Of these 7,801 are officers and 41,309 are enlisted personnel. Women are permitted to serve in 96 percent of Navy occupations and are eligible for 94 percent of all assignments. The only occupations in which women cannot serve are Submarine Warfare and Special Warfare for officers and Special Warfare, fire control technician, missile technician, and sonar technician (submarine) for enlisted personnel. (WREI, 1998) Although these statistics seem favorable for women wishing to have a career in the Navy today, history explains how that was not always the case.

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### **III. METHODOLOGY**

#### **A. DATA COLLECTION**

This thesis uses information obtained from in-depth interviews conducted with 21 female naval aviators/NFOs who had completed at least one sea-going deployment. The officers ranged in seniority from Lieutenant to Lieutenant Commander. Various aviation communities were included to gain a wide variety of professional background and experiences. Appendix A provides the breakdown of officers in the sample by designator and community, and Appendix B provides demographic data. The aviators/NFOs interviewed were selected by the researcher on the basis of aircraft type and location. Most of the interviewees were selected from a master list of female aviators and NFOs that was obtained from the Bureau of Naval Personnel.

The first interview was conducted by a professor from the Naval Postgraduate School and observed by the researcher. This interview was then transcribed and reviewed by a panel of professors to critique the question content. Feedback was given to improve the quality of the information obtained. The second interview was conducted by the researcher. The interview was recorded, transcribed, and then reviewed by a panel of professors, who again helped to refine the interview protocol, question content, and interviewer techniques.

At the beginning of each interview, the researcher asked the interviewee to fill out a demographic worksheet. Appendix C provides the demographic worksheet. The researcher conducted the interviews using standardized, open-ended questions that



afforded the interviewees enough latitude to discuss any related matters to the issue addressed. Additional questions were sometimes required to clarify answers. This was not done with the intent to prejudice answers, but rather to acquire further explanation regarding certain situations.

To build an effective rapport, the researcher began each interview by engaging in casual conversation prior to asking any questions. The researcher informed the interviewee that the conversation was recorded for accuracy purposes, but that confidentiality was of the utmost importance and that no names, squadrons, or airwings mentioned in the interview would be included in the final analysis. This set a tone of trust and openness. Appendix D provides the interview protocol and questions.

Female aviators/NFOs are apparently comfortable exchanging their stories with persons who they believe have similar backgrounds, experiences, and a perceived understanding of those experiences. The author, by virtue of her gender and aviation background, believed that she was able to make the interviewees feel at ease and open to convey their past experiences, both positive and negative.

This research required extensive travel. Appendix E lists the date, number of officers, and location of interviews.

## **B. DATA ANALYSIS AND THEME DEVELOPMENT**

The interviews were recorded on audio cassettes. After the interviews were completed, the audio cassettes were transcribed verbatim to facilitate data analysis. Once the interviews were transcribed, the researcher compiled the data on templates. Appendix F provides the data template. The templates were analyzed to obtain simple statistical

trends and to identify recurring themes from the perspective of female aviators/NFOs with respect to factors affecting their decision to stay in or leave the Navy.

Themes were then developed by analyzing recurring issues or topics evidenced in the interviewee responses. Each theme is presented in Chapter IV along with supporting justification and quotations, which reinforce the opinions of the female aviators/NFOs interviewed.

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## **IV. ANALYSIS**

### **A. OVERVIEW**

The data analysis yielded 14 prominent themes. These themes are presented and discussed below. Each theme is presented along with supporting justification. Each justification is reinforced with quotations that exemplify the opinions of the female officers interviewed.

### **B. THEME I: MOST INTERVIEWEES WERE INFLUENCED BY A FAMILY MEMBER TO JOIN THE MILITARY**

#### **1. Theme**

Most of the officers interviewed had at least one family member who had served in the military. In many cases, this person influenced the individual in some way to join the military. Service exposure included all four branches of the military, the Air Force, Army, Navy, and Marine Corps.

#### **2. Justification**

Among the officers interviewed, 13 had fathers who had served in a branch of the Armed Forces. One of the officers had a mother and father who had served in the Marine Corps. The remaining officer had an uncle who also served in the military.

One Lieutenant (A) whose father was a retired Navy Captain said it sounded like a good idea to have a job after graduation and since her dad was in the Navy it seemed like something to do:

Largely financial factors made me go to the Academy, with the idea being that it sounded like a good idea to have a job after graduation and my dad was in the Navy and it seemed like something to do. I finished high school in Arlington, VA so its got a large military population plus my parents were already in the military, or my dad rather...

One Lieutenant (C) said that had her dad not been in the military and pushed her in that direction, she never would have thought about it:

I guess my dad did just because he was former military. If he wasn't in the military, I would have never even thought about it. He had always kind of tried to push me in that direction and of course in college, I wasn't walking around in some nerdy uniform, forget that. So I guess he was my big influence...

One Lieutenant (G) whose father was a career Marine Corps officer said her father encouraged her to join ROTC:

I'd say probably my father influenced that the most. He was a career Marine Corps officer and when I was in high school, I didn't really know what I wanted to do and he really encouraged me to go into ROTC. He had also shown me literature for the Academy but, I went to an all-girl Catholic high school and there was no way in hell I was going to wear a uniform for another four years.

One Lieutenant (O) said that her dad, an Air Force pilot and an airline pilot, influenced her decision:

My father was a pilot and he never really brought his work home with him so we weren't, I mean we never went flying with him or any of that. He was an Air Force pilot and then an airline pilot and to be quite honest, I thought that might be pretty cool to do. Dad was thinking Air Force Academy, he'd always kinda thought that and I was like no way. And then to be quite honest, got in the Navy because at the time they weren't



letting women fly off the aircraft carriers or any of that stuff, but they were letting them fly adversaries, and I thought that would just about be the right ticket.

One Lieutenant (R), whose uncle was a Navy pilot, said she knew she wanted to fly when her uncle took her up in his private plane:

Let's see, it all ties into my uncle who was an A-4D pilot back in the day, and he just struck me as very honorable and decent and just neat. I hate to say neat because of the connotation that arises from that word but he's just a neat, neat, neat individual. I have the utmost respect for him, and I decided I wanted to fly so I knew early at around 12 years old when he took me up in his private plane. I knew that flying was what I wanted to do, and it became a decision of how do I get there.

## **C. THEME II: FAMILY AND FRIENDS WERE GENERALLY SUPPORTIVE OF THE INTERVIEWEE'S DECISION TO JOIN THE MILITARY**

### **1. Theme**

During the interview sessions, the researcher asked the female officers what their friends and family thought about their decision to join the military. Most of the officers interviewed expressed that they had received positive support from their friends and family. Some of the mothers initially seemed apprehensive about their daughters joining the military while their fathers were excited. Overall, their parents and friends thought that the military would be a good career opportunity and a chance for a secure retirement.

### **2. Justification**

Lieutenant (B) said that many of her father's friends were in the military and were really supportive of her decision to join the military:

I guess people thought it was pretty neat. A lot of my dad's friends had been in the military and of course they were really supportive of it. I think

most of my friends don't have or didn't have a very good idea of what the military was really like or anything. They knew that I wanted to fly for a long time and in fact one of my friend's mothers said, "Boy you know, you just did it. You said you wanted to fly and you went out and now you're flying." So, I think people knew it was what I wanted to do and nobody ever discouraged me from doing it and I think I was really fortunate to have been raised not only in a household but in a general environment, just because I grew up in California, that was very open to or I should say not closed minded to sexual or racial orientation so nobody ever said you can't do that cause you're a girl. Nobody ever told me that until my first year at the Naval Academy.

Lieutenant (E) said that her mom wanted her to join the military for the retirement benefits and her father supported her decision:

That's hard to say. My mom worked as a civilian at Lowry AFB and she was always making references that I should do this because she did the point system for the retirees of the Air Force, Navy, and Marines, and so she was always encouraging me to look into those avenues. My dad also encouraged me, I won't say encouraged me but definitely supported my decision as to whatever I wanted to do and he did.

Lieutenant (L) recalled how her mom was concerned about her joining the military, but her other family members were very proud of her decision:

My mom told me she didn't like it. She did not want her son in the military let alone her daughter. My brothers and sisters were supportive yet I don't think they thought I could do it. And that's my own judgment, I don't know if that's really true or not. My aunt and uncle, once I went through the military, were actually very proud of me and the fact that, they told me it was the best move I made, and I think it was.

Lieutenant (R) said that her mother was very supportive of her decision to join the military because she saw the educational benefits, however, some other family members were opposed until they realized the opportunities the military would provide:

My mother was supportive. She was always one of those people who said okay, go out and do what you want to do and don't let people say you can't do it for whatever reason. She thought it was great as well because we knew we were going to have to get scholarships, and I would have to

work in order to go to school and when she found out about the service academies and that they even pay you, she was all for it. The rest of my family, my uncle of course thought it was fantastic, but my grandmother and some of my great aunts and cousins on that side of the family thought, "Oh my God, what are you thinking, you're gonna be a war monger." Then they asked my mom, what have you raised, you've raised a war monger, don't you know what they train those kids to do and it was just laughable at the time. I was like, have you read the catalog, look at the education that's available. And then once they figured it out at family reunions, Christmas, Thanksgiving and that sort of thing, they finally saw the light and it was like oh, good education, oh, you don't actually have to be a war monger.

Lieutenant (T), who went to an all-girls' Catholic school, said that when she got accepted into the Naval Academy, her family was very proud of her and her friends were proud and excited for her:

They all thought it was really cool which was weird because I went to a Catholic girl's school. Everyone was totally positive. I got no negative feedback whatsoever. My family was super proud of me. They always thought it was super neat. I have a really big family, and my cousins and aunts and uncles just think it's great and then all my friends from high school just think it's great too. When I got in they were as excited for me as I was. They even got on the loud speaker at school and announced it, so it's always been positive, a very, very positive response. I think part of that is because none of them knew anything, there was no family legacy of, it's a man's place. None of them knew anything about it except for watching me go through the process.

Lieutenant (U) said that her mother was concerned with her safety at first, but her father was thrilled as were her friends:

When I chose aviation they were pretty, I guess surprised. They were excited when I went into the Navy although my friends were shocked at it. I'm from small town Iowa, we don't have a lot of recruitment although I understand a lot of, especially the Navy comes from Midwest small town kind of places. I guess people who want to see the world or something. But my mother of course would prefer I did something on the ground more safe. My father was thrilled to death, and the rest of them I think they were thrilled. I think mostly surprised and thrilled.

**D. THEME III: MOST INTERVIEWEES CHOSE AVIATION FOR FUN, EXCITEMENT, AND A CHALLENGE**

**1. Theme**

During the interview session, the researcher asked the female officers why they chose aviation. Most of them explained that they chose aviation for the fun, excitement, and challenge. They did not want to work in a nine-to-five job, sitting behind a desk; they wanted an “adventure.” Many interviewees also mentioned that the aviation officers they had met seemed happier than those in other communities.

**2. Justification**

Lieutenant (A) said she chose aviation because it seemed like a fun job, the officers in aviation seemed to be happier and having more fun than the surface officers, and she wanted to do something that was warrior oriented and aviation seemed like the biggest challenge:

I really had to do a lot of thinking about that because at the time, at the Academy I was kind of anti-military. I was sick of being suppressed for four years or repressed rather and so I kept trying to think, would I rather do a crappy job for five years or a more fun job for essentially ten years, and I went around and around about that. I really contemplated surface for a while because it was a shorter commitment but then I realized that I had a great time in Pensacola. That’s probably one of the best things that they did was send us down there for a week, and I had a really good time. I didn’t do the aviation cruise which is one of the things that they offer which would have been helpful in making my decision, but going down to Pensacola, seeing how much fun it was, and I think probably the primary motivator for me was the fact that when you looked around, it was the aviators as officers that seemed to be happier, that seemed to have more fun. They were the people that I related to more than the other communities. Plus I went through, the combat exclusion law was lifted and, I knew I wanted to do something that was line oriented that was you know, warrior oriented and aviation seemed like the biggest challenge and the most interesting thing to do so that’s why I picked that.



Lieutenant (H) chose aviation for the excitement:

Aviation, uh, cause the first time you see a jet or hear a jet, you just have to do it. I get the tingles every time, so it had to be that.

One Lieutenant Commander (M) said she picked aviation for the fun:

I decided I just wanted to have fun instead of be an engineer and be with people my own age so that's why I picked aviation. And I picked jets because I didn't wanna fly around for hours at a time, I wanted to have fun and I got lucky and I got them.

Another Lieutenant Commander (N) said that she joined the military in order to be a pilot because she wanted an adventurous job that offered her a physical and mental challenge as well:

Well, I chose aviation first I think. I joined the military in order to become a pilot. I wanted an adventurous job and I wanted to be challenged, physically and mentally so that's why. I didn't want a 9 to 5 type job.

Lieutenant (O) chose aviation because she figured it would be fun and challenging:

It wasn't something I wanted since I was a kid. It was kind of crunch time to make a decision about what I was gonna do with my life and I figured it would be fun and challenging so that's why I did it.

Another Lieutenant (Q) chose aviation because she thought it seemed like the competitive, fun, and challenging thing to do:

I've always been a female that, I love any challenge, any sport. I love playing football. I didn't want to sit behind a desk. There were still so many unrestricted line billets for us and I looked at Spec Ops. There were a couple of billets. There was one down in Key West to work training the Dolphins which I think would be really interesting, but I always enjoyed flying. I didn't really know that much about being a pilot personally, but it just seemed like the competitive, fun, challenging thing to do so that's really the honest answer to that question.



Lieutenant (T) selected aviation because she didn't want a desk job and she knew if she didn't like aviation she could always go SWO, but if she chose SWO first, she probably would not get an aviation transition:

I really was never super interested in aviation, but there's a lot of peer pressure at the Academy to go aviation cause it's the cool, fun thing to do and I wanted to do something where I was active. I didn't want to do a desk job and be in an office so it really came down to SWO or aviation because I wanted to do something real as far as being in the Navy. I remember when I was on the Yard Patrol Craft, which is a summer cruise, and I sat myself down. This was the summer before junior year and I said you will forget how much you hate this but remember nothing else, you do not want to go SWO, you do not want to go SWO. Sure enough, I forgot how much I hated it but I remembered sitting myself down and telling myself that and then plus, it really came down to service selection and I wasn't sure what I wanted to do. My company officer at the Academy was a pilot and he said you know what, if you hate flying, you can always quit and go SWO but if you hate SWO, it's really hard to quit and go fly, so I said okay, and I picked aviation, it was the right decision and it's been fun.

#### **E. THEME IV: MOST INTERVIEWEES SAID THEIR COMMITMENT TO THE NAVY IS TO SERVE THEIR COUNTRY**

##### **1. Theme**

Just as many of the WAVES during World War II were motivated by a desire for a dramatic departure from their previous life, along with a patriotic enthusiasm for serving the war effort, many of the interviewees in the present study felt that their commitment to the Navy was an opportunity to "serve my country" and to show a "sense of pride."

##### **2. Justification**

When the researcher asked the interviewees what their commitment to the Navy meant to them, 17 of the 21 women interviewed described their commitment to the Navy

as service to country or a sense of pride in their country. The justification for this theme lies in the following excerpts.

Lieutenant (C) talked about the pride she felt watching the morning colors being raised:

What does it mean? That is a hard one. Well I guess I can give you the pat statements about serving my country and being glad to serve my country, and that's true I am. It makes you proud and now living on a shoe base, when I stand duty, I have to go out there and stand there with the guys raising the flag and listen to the anthem and salute. I found myself lately thinking what a really cool thing that is. I stand there and, initially I felt kinda silly standing in the middle of the street saluting, but the more I do it, it just makes me really proud. It fills me with good feeling.

One Lieutenant (D) said her commitment was not about flying but about serving her country:

It's to serve my country, it's not about flying. It actually has nothing to do with flying. I like flying, it's fun, but I could stop flying tomorrow, and I'll be looking back on something fun that I did but I wouldn't miss it, I don't think. I liked it, and I have a good time doing it. I love instructing but the flying, I could walk away from it tomorrow. The Navy, well I think part of it is because I joined the Navy to join the Navy, I didn't even think about flying until I had to select something and flying sounded cool. But my commitment to the Navy, serving my country is really important. More than I care to admit sometimes.

Another Lieutenant (F) said she felt as though she owed a debt to the Navy and her country because of all the things the Navy did for her:

Well I feel like I do owe them something because they put me through this training and there's so many things that the Navy's done for me that I wouldn't have been able to experience if I wasn't in the military. I feel like I owe a debt to my country, and I'm happy to do that. I'm happy to serve my country...

Lieutenant (L) said her commitment is not just to fly but is a sense of duty, honor, and country:

I tear up every time I see the flag and that was before I was even in the military. There was definitely a sense of, it's not just a flying job, even though it is, and I hear stuff on the news about we're going to war or we're doing this and it's like okay, let's kick these guys butts and let's go. But it's a sense of duty, honor, country.

Lieutenant Commander (N) said her commitment was about serving her country and defending our way of life:

I think it's serving the country. What I like to think about it as is defending our way of life. We have a strong defense and in order to not have to go to war, that's the way I like to think of it as. Always being ready and for me personally at my level, what I like to do is improve the squadron. Do whatever I can to make the squadron better. To make the other pilots better once you get to be more senior yourself and more experienced. Whatever I can do to make them better. Now as an instructor of course, whatever I can do to train these guys to be the best so that they can go out and defend our way of life.

Lieutenant (S) said her commitment is about doing her best and serving her country:

That's a good question, I think, although it sounds trite, the bottom line is that I've enjoyed serving my country and I will continue to do so in whatever job I end up doing. I think that has to be more than any personal goals you have as your driving factor so I hold that in very high regard. Certainly it's been a very unique experience, one that not many people have done, especially what I've done and I recognize that and nobody can take that away. That's what I've accomplished and I certainly hold that very high as well. Those are the two things that I think of.

**F. THEME V: MOST INTERVIEWEES SAID THEIR COMMITMENT TO THE NAVY HAS LESSENNED OVER THE YEARS**

**1. Theme**

Most of the women interviewed felt that, due to some of the various events that have taken place throughout their Navy career, their commitment has lessened since they first joined. Some interviewees said that the plane they were assigned to lessened their commitment while others said that their commitment lessened due to a lack of promotion opportunities and recent political policies. Still other interviewees mentioned that their commitment to the Navy has changed due to a desire to have children and start a family and the inflexibility of the Navy in affording them the opportunity to do so.

**2. Justification**

Lieutenant (T) said her commitment has lessened because she was disappointed with the aircraft she was assigned to, and she doesn't want to be involved in the Navy anymore:

I still think the Navy is a great institution, I really, really do. I've probably gotten a little more selfish about what I want... I loved it. I've had a blast doing things I thought I would never do. At the Academy they train you, they want you to do career so the typical Academy midshipman thinks yah, I'm gonna do 20 years, I'm gonna be an admiral at 30 years or whatever. I obviously am gonna get out so I don't think that way anymore. I've gotten more selfish about it. I still think it's a wonderful, wonderful institution and I want to see it succeed, but I don't want to do it myself. I didn't want the plane that I fly. That was a huge disappointment for me, huge, and it took me seriously a couple of years to get over it.



Lieutenant Commander (M) said her commitment has lessened since pilot training because she feels the Navy just uses people and doesn't really care about them:

I have no more commitment to the Navy because I've become bitter and I think that the Navy basically uses people and then doesn't really care about them. Then they just spit you out when you're tired out and then they find somebody else to chew up. So, in terms of commitment to the Navy, I guess I stopped being committed somewhere after pilot training.

Lieutenant (K) said her commitment had waned because she has become disappointed with future promotion opportunities:

I feel that my commitment to the Navy has actually waned because I think in the beginning as a junior officer, I always felt if you do a really good job, you were going to continue to rise to the top. That's what all the skippers say and I did do a really good job and I feel disheartened now because my community really is a dead end community... I wish I would have realized four years ago what a dead end community it was, and I didn't. I just felt like we were sorta led down the primrose path. You keep working hard, you can reach anything, well that's not true. If you're in this community, you're not going anywhere... now here I sit as a selected O-4 who has great fitness reports behind her and no place to go. It's disgusting.

Lieutenant (B) said her commitment is now less because of political policies:

I'd have to say my commitment to it has grown a little bit less cause I don't agree with some of the political policies that the Navy has been forced to go by. So it's less the Navy than congressional decisions that have been made that I have the hardest time with. Our battle-cry as we walked out of our room, and I used to say this to my friend all the time, and my fiance was the one who said it to me as I left on cruise was, "don't die for a kurd." And it sounds really selfish to me in the human way but I don't think that I can resolve the situations that we've involved ourselves in right now which isn't the Navy's fault, it's really a political decision.



Lieutenant (D) said her commitment has lessened because of the growing importance of relationships to her and she does not feel that she is getting as much from the Navy as she is giving anymore:

I think for a long time, I've always been the person who was committed far more to other people than I ever was to myself. I put up with a lot of stuff for the greater good of the Navy. I kept my mouth shut, I think we the women, we all do that cause your commitment to seeing women succeed in the Navy is far greater than your commitment to having yourself have an easy time of it. I think I've always been that way ever since I was a little kid. But now, my commitment to my fiance and my life with him is far more important to me than my commitment to the Navy and a lot of that is because I get more joy. It's more an even exchange. I get as much if not more from my relationship with him than I put into it and it's been a while since I felt that way about the Navy. I used to feel that way, I got as much from it as I put into it and I'm starting not to feel that way anymore. So that's how it sort of changed.

Lieutenant (H) said her commitment has lessened because she has proven herself and she is tired of being the "first one:"

I'd say you take all the goods and you take all the bads and it just kind of, it changes your motivation, and I'd say that my motivation has definitely changed. I already considered that about the transition. I feel like I've proven myself and I definitely don't need to sit on my laurels or anything. But I'd definitely say over time my commitment certainly changed. Don't you get tired of always being the first one and when you walk in they're like oh, I've never or like you said, if they've met one, oh, I'm a qual, I know thus and so. It just gets kind of tiring after a while.

Lieutenant (S) said her desire to have a family changed her commitment to the Navy:

Definitely, like I said before, I was a career person, that's all I wanted to do, I didn't want to have kids, I didn't want to have a family, I wanted to be an astronaut and if I didn't do that, I wanted to keep flying and all that stuff. That has done a complete 180 in the past couple of years. I don't know how or why but I've decided that there's nothing wrong with having a normal life and a family. I don't think there's any way as a female mother I'd want to try to do a deployable Navy career and stuff like that. Once I decided that, there was no question at all in my mind what I wanted to do now.

Lieutenant (U) said that the importance she now places on her family, healthcare, and retirement has changed her commitment to the Navy:

Partly do to family, I'm married now, I'm in a comfortable relationship, I'm pregnant with our first child, I'm thinking about all of those family issues, thinking about separation and what sea tours do to a family and that has waned my commitment more than anything. Yah, more than anything. Although there's a lot of disillusion with the system right now, with the problems with Tricare and the retirement benefits decreasing and all those kind of things I would say it's definitely changed from when I came in. But when I came in too, there was more of a, this is a fun thing to do for a while until I figure out what I want to do for the rest of my life. I came in and never thought about marriage and a family and I wanted to be the woman of the world who has it all, but you really do change. You go through serious changes that you never expected that you would and whether it's instinctual or a nurturing thing, it's a powerful draw away from your commitments.

**G. THEME VI: MOST INTERVIEWEES FELT SATISFIED WITH THE RETURN ON THEIR COMMITMENT TO THE NAVY**

**1. Theme**

Even at a time when retention is on a downward trend and the operations tempo is high, while doing more with less, most of the interviewees do not feel that they give more to the Navy than they get in return. In fact, 14 said that they felt that they thought it all evens out in the end. Some interviewees felt that even though they have to give a lot of themselves to the Navy, they are equally rewarded with an amazing opportunity to earn their wings, to travel, to have a sense of power, and to be rewarded with a fun job.

## 2. Justification

Lieutenant (A) said that even though the increased operations tempo is frustrating, she is rewarded with power and a fun job:

I think my biggest complaint with the Navy is the op-tempo so then, that brings up the point that I think there's a certain amount of frustration with the powers that be that say hey, you know we're busting our ass, as we generally are in a fleet squadron, and it's that whole do more with less. I think as a JO you sit there and say to the powers that be, why do we keep doing more with less? Somebody needs to speak out and say, this is bullshit, we're not gonna do it. So, I think I put in serious hours that in a real world if I put in, I'd be making more money but, money's really not the issue for me at this point. I think you are equally rewarded with power no matter how, elusive or unreal that is and self-satisfaction because it's a fun job and most jobs are not fun. There's a variety there so I think I get back what I put in um, but do I resent it? Probably.

Lieutenant (B) said even though she's sacrificed some of her womanhood, she got the gift of flying and the opportunity to meet her husband:

I think I've gotten a lot from the Navy. I have definitely given a lot and I have probably sacrificed a lot on a personal basis and emotional basis, but I think I've done something that I... There's things that I've gained in return that I don't think I could have gotten through any other job. I mean, the gift of flying to me is beyond what you could ever really repay. So I would say that no, because I don't feel animosity or like I've been cheated out of anything. I would just have to say that it was just kind of a decision that I made. Had I chose a different path, there would have been other struggles and obstacles and I may not have completely realized what I was getting into. It may have been harder than it probably should have been. But overall, I'd say I've gotten a lot. Jeez, I met a great guy and I got to fly airplanes and I got to see the world and so I've gotten to do some pretty neat things. I think ultimately women end up sacrificing pieces of what it is to be a woman in order to make it easier on themselves, to adapt a little bit so they don't have to take as much of either ridicule or bad jobs or general harassment or whatever from the guys, so I think that's kind of the price you pay.

Lieutenant Commander (N) said she doesn't know if she could ever give back enough to repay the Navy for the training, experience, and travel that she has received:

I don't know, I've gotten a lot out of the Navy. I don't know if I could ever give back as much as I've gotten. I give as much as I can so, I don't know, that's a hard one. The training that I've gotten and the experience too, it's fairly unique for women I think to get that kind of experience you know to be discriminated against, hopefully it's unique, hopefully we don't have a lot of that in our country anyway. I mean it goes on but there's a law that says you can't do this cause you're a woman. I hope that doesn't go on too much. And plus the training, just being an aviator, taking off and landing from a carrier, holy cow, how many people can do that? People get to do that, living on a carrier, I mean it gets old but the first cruise is great, it's outstanding. Travel, I don't think I could pay that back. I guess that's the answer.

Lieutenant (O) said she's given a lot but she feels no bitterness or resentment about it because it was her choice:

I feel like I've given a lot but you know, it was my choice and I felt no resentment or bitterness. It was what I wanted to do. I came in the Navy knowing when I took my billet that I would deploy and cruise and I wanted to, that's all I wanted. I didn't want to get married until I was like 30. I never thought about kids...and I was just like oh, I'm gonna go in the Navy and travel and have fun and see the world and it never occurred to me.

Lieutenant (Q) said she doesn't feel that she gives more than she gets because of the unique opportunities and experience that the Navy has given her:

I personally don't. Some days you feel that way when you're at the squadron and you're out there on deployment and you're working seven days a week and not seeming to get a break. But I have such a great shore duty here and I've looked at it that way. I don't look at it as the Navy really owes me but I am enjoying it. So, no, I mean, I think it's something that you can't compare to something on the outside. One the experience, the opportunity you had, and two, the work, it's hard to describe to people sometimes what you do on a daily basis or, so no, to answer that question, no.



Lieutenant (U) said that when she was operational she accepted the time she had to put in but now that she is more settled and in a family life, she is starting to feel like she is putting in more than she's getting back:

I did sometimes at the squadron although I loved it when I was there and I loved the late hours and feeling like I accomplished something, but I think there are definitely times that I think, why do I put in the extra hours? Like sitting here until eight o'clock at night with something that doesn't really matter and is still going to be here in the morning and no one really cares about it. So I think we all get a sense of futility at times, especially on a staff job but I didn't feel it much in the squadron. I think when you're operational you accept it. Sometimes you fight it and maybe that's the difference of being single on operational tours because you don't have another focus, but I think the older I get and the more settled I am in my family life, the more you start feeling like you're putting in more than you're getting back.

#### **H. THEME VII: MOST INTERVIEWEES FELT THAT THE CONDITIONS OF SERVICE HAVE CHANGED FOR THE WORSE OVER THE PAST FEW YEARS**

##### **1. Theme**

Whether from the Tailhook debacle, political issues, doing more with less, or the downsizing of the military, 16 of the 21 women interviewed felt that the conditions of service - - meaning attitudes, motivation, and satisfaction with they job they are doing - - had changed over the past few years. Few felt that the changes were for the better, but the majority of the interviewees felt that the changes were definitely for the worse.

##### **2. Justification**

Lieutenant (A), who was a Naval Academy graduate and who has been in the Navy for nine years, felt that Tailhook 91' changed the Navy:

I think downsizing has affected us. I was in the Navy before Tailhook but I wasn't in the fleet before Tailhook. I think Tailhook did a lot for me as a



woman, and it's sad to say, I don't mean to sound negative cause I realize that it was poorly handled and a lot of innocent people got hurt, but by the same token, it directly made my life better. I think the awareness of sexism and the awareness of the Navy's attitude of the pervasiveness of the sexist behavior in Naval Aviation was accepted and had always been accepted for decades. And while I think if Tailhook hadn't happened, I would still be in the fleet, to be honest, I don't know if the combat exclusion law would have changed if it weren't for Tailhook. I firmly believe that there was a direct correlation. Some people argue the other point, that it was going to happen anyway but I don't know if I believe that. I really believe that if we hadn't of shamed ourselves so publicly, the things that we knew were going on the past 100 years and yet we get busted once and now, as a direct result of that, I can fly a combat aircraft, that's a big deal, so, I think things have changed a lot since I've been in the Navy. Other fleet issues, op-tempo's the biggest with the downsizing, I think two things, the downsizing and then the increased health of the economy and all of the Vietnam Vet guys getting out of commercial air have been three big changes in the Navy for me. So I think there have been lots of changes since I've been in that have affected my lifestyle. Some good, some bad, definitely, I can say the worst would be op-tempo for me and that's the one thing that I think is making me want to leave.

Lieutenant (E) said that the conditions of service changed due to Tailhook for the better and for the worse. It was a good thing because it made people aware that you have to treat women like people and it was a bad thing because people are now afraid to say anything around women:

I think as far as all the tailhook stuff, I think that that single event was two sided, it was a very good thing and it was a very bad thing. I think it was a very good thing in that it finally made people aware that you have to treat women like a person and I think that that came out. On the other side, I've heard a lot of stories about some of the guys that I was in my squadron with that and seeing how it trickled down to us when we got to the squadron, the tailhook thing, people are afraid to say the word damn around me. "Oh, excuse me ma'am," I think in that respect, it was like a pendulum that went way one way and I think now it's just starting to even out a little bit now that there's more women. I think it's high time that it leveled out.

Another Lieutenant (G) felt that conditions have changed for the better because she does not feel like she has to deal with condescending attitudes from men anymore, but it is worse because a lot of people are afraid to kid around anymore:

I really think, it's better and it's worse. It's better because I don't feel like I have to deal with condescending attitudes from men who say, you can't go and land on a carrier and that kind of thing. I like having equal footing and being treated equally. That is definitely better than when I first started. When I first started women definitely had their problems as to what they could do and now, so many more doors are open that I'm treated better as far as my capabilities. It's worse in a way because I think the Navy overacted in the way that they integrated women and so it's just not as much fun as it was when I first started and I think people are just afraid to kid around and be obnoxious and things like that and I think that takes some of the fun out of the ready room atmosphere.

Another Lieutenant (R) felt that the conditions of service have changed for the worse because the new recruits coming in have no respect for authority anymore:

I think that people are more dissatisfied since I've been in and I think that it is a direct result of, and I hate to say that whole TQL thing, but it's the new touchy, feely service and I think it's throughout all. They're teaching the new recruits about all of their rights and all of their personal power and I don't entirely disagree with that, it's just that the Navy is not really a democratic society. It isn't, you have people of lower rank, lower responsibility, lower authority levels because of the job that we have to do and I think that they're empowering these young recruits to the point where they don't respect authority and they don't take authority well and they have no responsibility. And that includes not taking responsibility for their own actions or accepting any responsibility for anything anymore. It's just ridiculous. Half the time you can't even get a salute coming through the gate. Maybe I'm one of those old dinosaurs but I don't give a crap if I went to the Naval Academy and you think that I'm a piece of crap, you will salute me by God because I have 10 years in the service and whether you think that I know anything or not, you're gonna respect my uniform and you better pop too, and if I have to stand you up and dress you up, then I'll do it. But it's so hard, it's like everybody's doing it. I don't think that it's because of the whole women in the military thing. Now we're integrating women everywhere and I don't think that that's the cause. I think it started before that and then you had tailhook and now you have women and now you have all of this sensitivity training. It's just a

load of crap. I think if you let people be people and re-instill that this is the military, and there are certain things that you're required to do? Uh, re-instill that honor, courage, and commitment that everyone's talking about.

Another Lieutenant (B) felt that the conditions of service have changed in that she does much less flying and more paperwork, and she senses a pervasive generation X, "what's in it for me," attitude amongst her fellow peers and subordinates:

I think the X generation is more about what you can do for me. I think it's a lot of it. What has the Navy done for me lately and I see that really prevalent, especially in aviation. It's just phenomenal because you've got a lot of guys who are assigned to the training command and personally we don't have that problem with this particular squadron, but I know that in other squadrons, guys are just like hey, I can't work today, I gotta do my airline applications and it's like, the Navy is still paying you to do a job, you owe them that. You still owe them a year and it's not a year of gaffing off and filling out applications to get other jobs, that's to do on your own time. I think that there's a lot more selfishness and not as much dedication to service, but I think that that's also due to some abuse on the services part and that does have to do with doing more with less. But because people do get so completely burnt out, they feel very constricted by a lot of rules and regulations. We can't fly as much, we have more paperwork, so there's a growing level of frustration on their part which I think in the end leaves them to kind of feel like screw it, I don't need to work that hard for the Navy anymore, I've done my time. So I think it's a two way kind of thing.

Lieutenant (F) said that the conditions of service have changed due to generation X and the business attitude they have about the military:

Motivation has definitely gone down hill. I definitely see that, especially in the training command, coming back here. The different types of students we get compared to what I perceived us as being as students. Everybody talks about it and they all call them the generation Xers, like what's in it for me? They're not afraid of instructors anymore and I see it sometimes, not everybody is like that but there is a definite shift. I don't know if they're smarter than us, but they're technology smart. They think of the military more like a business. There are some that don't feel that way, they wanna be skippers and all that. There's also, just from being down here in this whole area, everybody's getting out so they have that



whole business application kind of thing but I don't know if that's just this area but I think it's the military as a whole cause everybody's getting out.

Another Lieutenant (D) felt that the conditions have changed for the worse because of a lack of flying and a lack of fun which is evidenced by the retention problem:

I think it's changed for the worse. I think the retention problem is a huge indicator of that but I think we pay a lot of lip service to more money and more this and more that. Since the beginning of time, people have served in the military for less money than their civilian counterparts and lots of family separation. That's always been there but people have been more willing to do it. I think a lot of it is the way the country is going. I just think with all the political correctness, people are unwilling to take chances in general. I think the people have just sort of lost their sense of purpose in the military a lot and you fly, you're not allowed to do anything, you know the stuff you used to be allowed to do, you're not allowed to do and a lot of that's just being so safe that we're almost unsafe cause we're so damn safe. And because of that people are having a lot less fun and their skills aren't what they should be cause they don't get to fly as much. That's all stuff that comes up in arguments cause you're just generally unhappy. And so you're even more unhappy about that now because you're not enjoying what you're doing.

One Lieutenant (H) said that doing more with less has had a definite negative impact on morale:

It's changed but I think some of it too is just where you are. As far as things now, the one definite change I think is overall quality of life, doing more with less, which has had a definite negative impact on morale, so that would be the big change.

Lieutenant (K) thinks the conditions have definitely changed for the worse due to a lack of money for parts:

It's gotten so bad in the last two years. They're spreading everything so thin, it makes me not even want to be a part of it. We have a terrible engine problem. The engines keep failing but there's no money, you just put that other engine in, well, that other engine has the same problems that all of the other ones did that are brand new in the can. Let's fix these before we put them on the airplanes and maybe kill somebody. No, there's no money, you've gotta use all these engines that are in the can

before we spend any money to fix any new ones. But doesn't that dawn on you that there might be 10 or 12 people in that helicopter when that engine chooses to quit and you're not going to be single engine, flight capable. These are things that actually scare me, it's like, you've gotta be kidding me, you don't have the money to fix this problem. It just makes me not want to be a part of it anymore. I don't like what I see. I think that they're cuttin and they're cuttin not to the bone, they're cuttin through the bone.

Lieutenant Commander (M) felt that the conditions of service have changed for the worse due to a lack of money which has led to lowered readiness standards:

Well, before the gulf war, when I got to my squadron, the pilots were getting like, five hours a month of flying time. It was crazy and then the Gulf War came along and they said we could all fly our thirty hours a month. Life was good again. Obviously since then, things have changed a lot. There's no money. When you talk about being combat ready, readiness ratings that we do, you know, C1-C2-C3-C4, well here's what I see. We don't have enough money to get flight time to be C1 so what did the Navy do? Well, we restructured our matrixes so that all of a sudden we went from being C3 to being C1 so we don't have enough money to fly so we're just gonna lower our standards. We can't get parts and the aviation mishap rate has sky-rocketed and I think it's due to the fact that, we're not getting flight time, we don't have parts, and the op-tempo. I guess it's gotten better in that now the cruises are held to six months pretty much religiously whereas they used to go eight, nine, ten months or whatever and, wear it like a banner of pride when they got home. Here's the other major trend that I've seen since I came in. In my first squadron, nobody talked about getting out of the Navy ever. It was a taboo subject, nobody talked about getting out and you certainly never uttered anything if you thought about it cause you knew it would hurt your fitrep. Now it's all everybody talks about. In the ready room all the JO's talk about getting out as soon as their commitments up. All of them, it's amazing. Nobody talks about staying in the Navy anymore. Everybody talks about getting out. I think it's because people really don't come into the Navy to serve their country anymore. I think they come in the Navy just to have somebody to pay for them to learn how to fly or to get money for school. They just come in to get something and get out, I mean that's all I can think of. At my reunion, I felt like I was a huge loser because I was still in the Navy and everybody there was out. Maybe 10% of my class was at the reunion, now granted, the ones that were in were probably at sea, they couldn't be there, but it was just amazing how many people had gotten out and it's just acceptable now to talk about it. I can't even find a senior



person in the Navy to encourage people to stay in. My CO and XO, were basically like, use this next shore duty tour to prepare yourself to get out, that's what I would do. I just can't advise anybody to stay in the Navy anymore because you're only getting 40% retirement and you're just doing more with less and it's just coming down to that. Everybody's doing more with less and the CNO's trying to tell us we're not doing more with less, and that's just bullshit. They've done statistics, our op-tempo has increased and the number of people and ships have decreased, how does that work out to not doing more with less?

Lieutenant (P) said that the conditions of service have definitely changed for the worse in that the status of an officer in society is not worth that much anymore and because of political over-correctness:

Everyone is jumping ship all around. At the RAG the only people who are staying in are the F-14 transitions. Everyone else is getting out. And so it's a huge change from before. I think that the Navy's changed so much just in the past, I don't know ten years. Being an officer really used to mean something. It meant you had some clout out in society, it meant people took your word. It meant you didn't need to show your ID if you're wearing a uniform. You had a lot more status in society, now, nothing. It's nothing. I agree, it used to be kind of a good ole boys club, but I kinda liked it when it was like that. There was a great sense of camaraderie, which I don't think it is to that extent anymore. Yah, the Navy's changed. Before, people were talking about fast cars and fast women, now in the ready room, everyone's talking about the stock exchange, investments and computers. I don't think it has that much to do with the people who are coming into the Navy now as it does all the restrictions that the Navy puts on people for political correctness is one, to the point that we're overcorrecting. We're so politically correct now that you can't get your job done. In addition to changing the rules all the time, or imposing so many rules now that you just feel like you're under a microscope all the time and so that's why everyone I know and why the Navy's changed and why everyone's getting out. Nobody wants to stay in because it doesn't carry with it the status that it did, I'm a naval aviator, I fly this kind of airplane. And nobody's staying in for that anymore, it's not enough anymore. So, people are getting out to pursue different things that are gonna enable them to provide for their family better, be home for their family more, you know family has become all important anymore. So, I definitely think it's changed.

**I. THEME VIII: A NUMBER OF INTERVIEWEES' FELT THAT THEY HAD "TYPICALLY-FEMALE" OR NON-COMPETITIVE JOBS THROUGHOUT THEIR CAREER**

**1. Theme**

Unlike employers in the civilian sector, the military must pay women and men the same salaries for the jobs that they do. Senior leadership, however, can still discriminate by placing women in various jobs that are typically less competitive. Whether this is a conscious or subconscious decision, it is surprising to see how often it is still seen as occurring. When the researcher asked female officers to tell a little about the jobs they held in their past tours, some of the women mentioned that they felt they were given too many jobs in the Administration Department, which often included, public affairs officer (PAO), coffee mess officer, command managed equal opportunity officer (CMEO), or legal officer. They also felt that they were less likely to get the more "competitive jobs" in their squadrons than were their male counterparts. "Competitive jobs" are generally the ones that are needed to get the number one fitness reports which leads to faster promotion or advancement.

**2. Justification**

Lieutenant (A) felt that she was given a job as the "pregnancy officer" because her skipper had a naïve fear of female issues:

I noticed no bias really, I lie, because I told you about being designated as the pregnancy officer. But again I don't know if that was bias, I think that was my second skipper's just naïve fear of female issues. You know I don't think he meant it as an insult or negatively and actually, I warmed to the idea just because I did kind of, I think you look at the female sailors in your squadron as your responsibility. I was also Navy Rights and Responsibilities Officer (NR&R) so I was one of the first people to lecture

them on these issues when they get to the squadron. In fact, the 14 skipper, the F-14 skipper in one of our squadrons was an Academy grad and he heard me do NR&R for my squadron so before they got any women in his squadron, I had to come and do NR&R for his whole squadron on sexual harassment, women's issues, and frat. That was a little freaky cause it's all men, it's all fighter guys and that was scary but it worked out well and you have to be flattered that somebody bothered to ask you, but at the same time you realize it's kind of stupid that because I'm a woman what I say about sexual harassment is more valid. That has always kind of bugged me but at the same time, since I think I know everything then in my opinion I think my opinion on sexual harassment is right and I'm happy to spread that around. It is kind of full of crap.

Lieutenant (H) said that she deserved a job in operations in her second squadron but her Commanding Officer told her it would never happen in his command:

Every command I was in I spent at least half of my time in Admin. My second squadron they kept me with Admin. First squadron I didn't get into Ops, probably just because of my position. Second squadron, I deserved it but the skipper told me outright it would never happen in his command.

Lieutenant Commander (M) said that her Commanding Officer and Executive Officer did not let the women in her squadron work in Operations:

The CO's didn't make me do anything necessarily but one thing that I felt was that both the other female and I wanted to be in schedules, in operations. That's one of the tickets to punch and neither of us got in there the whole time we were there. That was the one thing I remember saying, I want to do that or I want to be a maintenance division officer and they didn't have maintenance division officers and actually, they started at my suggestion later but we never got in there and I was kind of torqued because I thought that that was kind of discriminatory. It could be viewed as discriminatory cause then the third female came and she kept trying to get into ops and they wouldn't let her in either. I got all the administrative jobs, the women jobs, the Admin officer, the communication's officer. All those little admin jobs, I always got those. But that was where I thought there was a little discrimination because the other women got all those jobs too, training, admin, they were all assigned those.

**J. THEME IX: MOST INTERVIEWEES FELT THAT THEY HAD NO POSITIVE FEMALE ROLE MODELS**

**1. Theme**

Women in combat aviation are still a novelty. It is not surprising, then, to find that most of the women interviewed felt that they had no positive female role models in aviation. However, due to findings that mentoring is an important process for career progression, the lack of female role models in aviation is a problem.

**2. Justification**

During the interviews, the researcher asked the female aviators/NFOs if they had any positive female role models to look up to, and the overwhelming response was “no.” In fact, 19 of the 21 women interviewed felt they had no female role models in aviation. The following excerpts explain why.

Lieutenant (A) felt that the female commanders that she has seen in the military do not look as happy as do their male counterparts:

There are so few women to look up to who have everything, who have a Navy career and a healthy family and I was thinking about this the other day, I wonder if the girls look at me the way I look at the Commanders that I see? For the most part, not that they're not nice people but they just don't look as happy or as confident as their male counterparts.

Lieutenant (B) said that she did not have any female role models in aviation because she has always been the senior female aviator in her command:

I've never had any carrier female, no. I would say actually in the RAG there was one gal who was an instructor. We had two female instructors. One did not do very well, she ended up actually getting kicked out. The other one did real well but she voluntarily left and other than that, I've always been the senior female aviator, so I am the role model. I don't know that they'll ever get anybody like that cause I don't know that it can



be done. I think it's a pretty hard balance and to sustain that for a long time, I don't know if there's too many people who would say, I'm gonna stay in to be that female role model. I'm not willing to do it.

Lieutenant (D) said that the only role models female aviators have are each other:

No, just each other and just because you're the same rank or even junior you can look at someone like, hey, I like the way she handled that, she handled that well or whatever, but no one senior. There's only one woman up there who's made it far who has children and the only reason she was able to have children is because the combat exclusion was in place and she had time to not fly. Yes, she became skipper of a squadron but by the time she was skipper of the squadron, combat exclusion was just going away and she was too senior to do anything tactical so she never really had to leave her kids for a long time. I don't know how to fix that cause that's not fixable.

Lieutenant (E) felt that there are no successful women in aviation who can combine a family and work, but if there was, it might be easier for other junior women:

There's guys out there they can look at and say he's the CO of the squadron, I really look up to him, I really want to be like him. However, for us, I don't know of any females, obviously since we are kind of the pioneers there really aren't so I think if we were able to see somebody who had kids that was married that was doing this job and doing it successfully, I think that might be easier for us.

Lieutenant (H) said she knows of one role model but in order to get there she had to sacrifice a lot:

There's a couple odd ones like a woman who's out at Whidbey Island, not that she's odd, she's making it. She made a real tough choice, you've got to respect her and she chose the Navy. She's going to be a single O-4, she's getting groomed, she's going to be having a command and all that, but look at the costs. You sacrifice your social life, you get told who you can date and who you cannot date, when to conceive, and all that other stuff.



Another Lieutenant (U) said she did not know of any female role models in aviation and she thinks it is because of the sacrifices that senior women have to make:

No, very few, it's such a huge sacrifice. I knew of one but it was so hard for her and she spoke of her hardships. Eventually, that part of you comes out that says I want more. My girlfriend is getting out and she called me crying, she was just hysterical. She said she had dropped her letter and was so sad. She had worked for a female admiral who told her, of the decision she had to make. The admiral told her it had to be the Navy or a family, the admiral chose the Navy and has no family life and so her job is the Navy.

Lieutenant Commander (N) said she only knew of one female role model, but this person is out of the Navy now:

In the military, there's only one that I know of and she was a Captain. She's the only one I know and I barely knew her. I met her once, before they changed the combat exclusion law at a DACOWITZ convention in DC. We were at the RAG hating life and so three of us got on a military flight and went to D.C. for this convention and we stayed at her house. She was great. I don't know what she did to promote women in the services but she did a lot. I don't know the specifics...and it was nice just talking to her and knowing that she was there and she was someone who was actually supportive. She gave up a lot I think. She was like one of the first women jet pilots and you know I would never have been able to tolerate what she did.

## **K. THEME X: THE PEAK CAREER EXPERIENCES OF MOST INTERVIEWEES INVOLVE AN ACCOMPLISHMENT OR ACHIEVEMENT**

### **1. Theme**

Most of the women interviewed had no problem thinking of a "peak experience" in their career. In fact, 18 of the 21 women told stories about their past accomplishments and achievements as a peak experience. For the most part, these accomplishments and achievements involved getting difficult qualifications, doing well on difficult missions, or

fitting in and feeling like a part of the team. A few even went so far as to mention not “screwing things up” for other women behind them as a major peak experience.

## **2. Justification**

Lieutenant (R) said her peak experiences involved getting her mission commander qualification and being respected throughout her airwing:

I was accepted as a person who happened to be a woman after the fact. I think that they accepted my personality and out of that acceptance of my personality, the fact that I was a woman just became a mute point. I did a lot of things, I got my RECCE commander, my RECCE strike lead, and I led a lot of briefs when we were over in the Gulf. I got my mission commander, and I think that throughout the airwing, I was respected as competent.

Lieutenant (S) said her peak experience was when she got her wings because it was a sense of accomplishment and she achieved her goal:

Probably getting my wings, other than graduating from the Academy, was the best feeling of accomplishment and doing what I set out to do kind of thing. I’m sure you can understand it was very, very exciting. So, I’d certainly classify that as the high point because you work so hard to get there and it’s just a unique, neat experience for anybody who makes it through.

Lieutenant Commander (M) said her peak experiences involved feeling like she was doing something worthwhile while training pilots to go to the Gulf War and having the opportunity to go to sea:

A high point in my career was in my first squadron. It was great because I was basically flying in a jet off land, and it was during the Persian Gulf war. Before any ship went over there, they had to get a training check in the block with my squadron or our squadron. So we were on the road all the time, going places, flying against ships. The op-tempo was high but the camaraderie was great. We felt like we were doing something worthwhile. We were helping the guys get ready to go over. Then, actually being on the carrier was a high point because I just remember being on the

flight deck of the carrier sometimes and looking around at all of the multi-million dollar aircraft and being amazed about being a part of it. Being on the pointy tip of the spear. I just felt like I was doing something worth while.

Another Lieutenant (P) said her peak experience involved one of her first flights in her squadron where she did a really good job and got recognition for it:

First tour, flying with a Top Gun guy and we're going out there and we're to conduct a War at Sea exercise. I was the wingman and I was so new. I had been in the squadron less than a month and he was taking me out there, to defend the ship essentially. I was assigned my little altitude to look on the radar and it happens to be low, and bandits happen to be low and I miss them but he gets a visual pick-up, and this is flying stuff, he gets a visual pick-up and we go from 25,000 feet down to 1,000 ft with a pure split S. He doesn't say a word to me other than hey, you know I'm tally. Pure split S and I stayed with him and he came back and said, you're gonna do okay and that was awesome cause I was a Nugget and he expects a lot and to come back after a flight like that and have him say well you messed up on radar but you did a damn good job as a wingman sticking with me and getting a visual sort of thing and killing these guys right here. And that's what it's all about.

Lieutenant (T) felt that being on cruise and the camaraderie she experienced were definite high points:

Cruise definitely. Especially the first one. The second one I had kinda been there, done that but, I just really enjoyed it. I think it's cool, I am pretty patriotic so on my second cruise we went to the Southern Hemisphere and I saw the Southern Cross, and I was standing out on the deck in the middle of the night and I'm like, I am on one of the most powerful warships in the world, we could go schwack anyone we want and there's the Southern Cross. I just really liked being out to sea. I didn't miss home too much and the camaraderie was great. That's probably one of the high points too. Just had a blast. Had good camaraderie with everyone and I've always gotten along well so I really haven't had any problems. Fun, funny, motivated, I just had a blast being a JO. Not the flying, just the people.

Another Lieutenant (G) said that finishing a difficult first cruise was a peak experience:

For me, finishing the first cruise I went on was a peak experience definitely. Just because I was in an airwing that had a lot of problems. I was really happy that I had finished and I had done well. I felt like I had contributed to the squadron and that I had helped the squadron. I had been a good example for the junior troops because there were a lot of mistakes made on both sides in the issue of women on that cruise. We had a lot of aviators that before had been very vocal about not wanting women so it was difficult sometimes to accept them as being fair and unbiased.

Lieutenant (K) said that having a boss who implemented her ideas was a peak experience:

Probably as an assistant operation's officer. We were last in efficiency and we weren't getting our students through quick enough and a new ops boss came in and I had made a ton of recommendations and he implemented them. In about six weeks we went from last to first in efficiency. Most of the stuff was stuff that I had asked him to implement. That was really rewarding. I just couldn't believe the changes and that was really neat to me too because I actually felt like I really had a large part to do with that.

**L. THEME XI: MOST INTERVIEWEES FELT THAT THE MOST STRESSFUL TIMES IN THEIR CAREERS INVOLVED GENDER ISSUES, QUALITY OF LIFE ISSUES, OR POOR LEADERSHIP**

**1. Theme**

Most of the women interviewed said that the most stressful time or lowest point in their career has involved gender issues (such as being the only woman in a certain situation and not getting a very warm welcome), quality of life issues (such as not having control over their own lives or not being able to get orders to work for them and their husbands), and poor leadership (as evidenced by Commanding Officers allowing blatant discrimination to take place and, in some instances, being the discriminator).



## 2. Justification

Lieutenant (B) recalled the following incident when she was the only woman in her class:

A big low point I would have to say would be when I went to a school and I was the only woman in the class. This was a professional class with people from all different communities. The presentation by the people giving the class was extremely sexually biased. Jokes coming in, particularly blonde jokes and they would look over at me and say, oh, sorry. It was very pointed and very derogatory towards women as a whole. I ended up complaining about it to some people, not putting in a formal complaint but basically I talked to some people and I did not want it to go in the direction that it did. It got to high levels that this was going on and it was out of my control to the point where I couldn't stop it. I wanted to badly because I thought they were gonna think that I basically reported somebody. Unbeknownst to me actually, one of the other class members had actually said some things to the people running the class that things were out of line. A Marine. Some good people, I mean that's the thing that's frustrating is it's usually only a few bad apples and really the majority of the class is really good. I think what happened to a lot of them was that they started telling jokes too and I don't think they realized the impact that it had on me and how awkward it made me feel. But because of the people running the class, they were, i.e. the leadership were displaying this. It was kind of like at the Academy, if the company officers say it's okay, then the guys follow suit. The underlings say well okay, that must be the way it is and that's kind of what ended up happening. They got in trouble. Essentially they had a Navy Captain come over and say that the behavior was unacceptable etc., etc. Personally, I don't really think he thought so but I think he was told he had to do it. It's just the impression I got from the way he said things. And the guy who ran the class called me in and it got really ugly, extremely uncomfortable for me to the point where driving home I just thought the best thing I could do for myself was to drive my car into a median. Pretty traumatic, and it sounds real simple. It sounds so dumb but you know, I had really worked hard and never got into any kind of sexual harassment issues even when it probably hurt me. I've always been able to stave off enough of the attitudes. I'm a big person and fairly loud and obnoxious and I'm kind of a smart ass and people generally speaking leave me alone. In this case I was severely outnumbered so, it was just pretty bad. That was definite low point. And I guess the worst thing about it in my mind was the lack of responsibility that the people who were really wrong took and instead said, "she got us in trouble" as opposed to saying what we did



was really wrong. So, I think the focus, when those kinds of things happen, is misdirected. As if what I did was wrong.

Lieutenant (H) said her low point involved being treated really poorly because of her gender:

Being treated really, really poorly, wrong. Tiger cruise my first cruise, my dad came out and they were giving all the people that were going do back to back cruises.... The Skipper and XO had a big old all officer's meeting and invited all the families. They were giving everybody a set of desert cammies, which is the thing over there. You all covet the little things. And so they gave a set out to everybody but me, and they gave me the black thing that you wrap around yourself with a mask. He said, they don't make a woman's uniform and I said, there's not a piece of gear that I own that's made for women and I still did my job. That just really sucked cause it was in front of my dad and I felt like that was a pretty big slight.

Lieutenant (S) felt that cruise was a low point because none of her fellow male squadron mates wanted to talk to her for fear of people thinking they had something romantic going on:

Cruise was tough, I lived with some girls from some other squadrons which was great. They were wonderful although they didn't know specifically what I was going through. I think a lot of my friends and I do think they're friends but I think they kind of shied away from me only because people talk about everything. I had one friend say well I didn't want people talking about us thinking there was something going on and that kind of thing. That's the reason he didn't talk to me when I needed someone. I did have one very good friend in the squadron who really helped me a lot and we talked a lot. Luckily he wasn't concerned about what other people thought and then there were rumors shortly there after. I attribute a lot to him for having done that and being there. He kind of understood that what I was going through was maybe a little different and what every girl goes through is maybe a little different than your typical smoking, scratching, joking, ready room guy mentality.

Lieutenant Commander (N) felt that her first cruise was the most stressful time of her career because many of the guys did not want her to be there:

That was in my first squadron when we were on cruise the first time, just all the problems that I was having with trying to survive. Just trying to survive the animosity and I think there was a lot of back-stabbing going on. People saying things that weren't true or every mistake I made would be exaggerated or overblown. And I actually had a gunner who was a thirty year veteran in the Navy and he came to me one day and told me that they said all kinds of things about me behind my back that were not true. By the time that happened though, I already knew that things were going on. But I guess one of the things that happened was the Ops-O was the one who told me that he didn't like women around and he would try to logically explain his position but I didn't care. He had a lot of control over when I flew, who I flew with, and stuff like that and at one point, they started flying me with O-4s and above only. No explanation, nothing, and the way I found out about it was the schedules writer came up to me and said hey, they told me to fly you with O-4s and above only and I was like well why and he said, "I don't know."

Lieutenant (U) thought that the lack of socialization with other women and the constant rumor mill were most stressful:

Um, I think the lack of socialization in the squadron of the few women was really, really hard. Especially when I went on cruise. We did take a female intelligence officer with us who was my roommate and she was a great release for me and a great relief for me. However, there was so much strange stuff you know, if I would go on liberty with a guy, it was the old rumor mill. Even back in the squadron if we'd lunch together too much we had something going on. That was a constant struggle. The whole rumor mill was a really horrible thing for both myself and the other female. In fact, I think that's why she left the community. I kind of just let it pass and ignored it and I had great friends in the squadron and had fared very well there and I didn't let it bother me. Personally, although I tried not to let it show professionally or even socially, it was really hard. I had a lot of really wonderful friends in the squadron but there were those few that always made it difficult, always made a point to be degrading at times. I had a department head tell me once when I checked in, and he was being honest and I appreciated that, he said, "Everything you get in this squadron, you'll get because you're a female." He said, "If you accept that right up front, then when you hear it from everybody else it won't bother you." And you know, he's right, he knew it wasn't because I

was a female but he knew that I would hear that all the time, she got this because of that and he said as long as you accept that up front and expect to hear it, you'll get along fine and I did hear that a lot, but I was also one of the few single people in the squadron. Because of that, I think I worked harder than a lot of people did.

Lieutenant Commander (M) felt that going through pilot training was her biggest stressor because when she was having difficulties, the guys did not want to talk to her:

Pilot training, just the animosity that I felt there. I was the only one, the only woman and it was hard. The guys that I was going through with were nice but when somebody in the Navy starts to have problems people distance themselves because they don't want to catch it or something. So, it just was a very lonely, very, very lonely, miserable time.

Lieutenant (F) said that being separated from her fiancé was a huge stressor:

Being separated from my husband was really hard. We weren't married at the time because we were separated by like an entire country. He was down here and I wasn't. So deploying with him not knowing what I was doing, was hard on him and hard on me cause he got really stressed out and just worried about me being on this ship with a bunch of guys. So it made me always defensive and always worried about what he was thinking and he would get really jealous, so our relationship was really hard. That was the drawback. I was afraid to have fun. I felt guilty when I was having fun in port because I knew he would hate it.

Lieutenant (G) felt that doing two back-to-back cruises and being separated from her husband was most stressful for her:

My fleet squadron did two deployments so eleven months after we got back from the first one, we were going back out and it was stressful because we were always doing something and there was very little stability. I could never plan my schedule a week ahead so I didn't know when I could go home and visit, I didn't know for sure when I could go up and visit my husband, so being apart from my husband for three years was really hard.



Lieutenant Commander (M) said that a major stressor was being on cruise when her grandmother was ill and not being able to be with her:

Being on cruise when my grandma goes in the hospital and she's about to die, that's a pretty big stressor and not being able to leave the boat. Being separated from my fiancé and just being gone so much between work-ups and cruise was hard. Those were pretty much the major stressors for me.

Lieutenant (R) said that a lack of good leadership was one of her biggest stressors:

I think there were stressors that you have and it's not necessarily a woman thing, it's just anybody which is when your boss doesn't back you or support you or is spineless or making one decision then says something else. And when he tells you to do something and you do it and then he doesn't back you and makes you look bad like it was your idea. That probably has been the worst example of poor leadership. I can't think of a single thing that's more stressful.

Lieutenant (P) said that one of her skippers made her life stressful because he was a micro-manager and a catalyst for creating tension:

The reign of terror with one of our skippers. He sucked. It was difficult for every individual in the squadron. One individual skipper just micro-managed people, he didn't give anybody the autonomy to make their own decisions. If he was in the ready room everyone cleared out. If you flew with him he was a numbskull. He just did everything to degrade morale. We would have a lot of required events you had to go to and simulate fun and amongst the JO's, everyone except for the skipper, everyone got along great but the skipper was just a catalyst for creating tension and tasking and just miserable. You could explain something to him and he would not take you for face value. You had to have three pubs or whatever backing you up on anything from tactics to a flight schedule. He was just a mess. So that's one of the biggest stressors. You have somebody who's in charge of your whole group who does not know how to handle people at all. He had zero people skills. On the outside, he might be a great guy but in a position of power he was just ridiculous. I didn't enjoy it at all and no one did. There's not any one person who had a good time.

**M. THEME XII: ALL INTERVIEWEES HAD FACED ADVERSITIES OR EXPERIENCED DISCRIMINATION IN THE NAVY DUE TO THEIR GENDER**

**1. Theme**

The interviewees reported numerous instances of gender discrimination when asked about their general experiences throughout their career. Most of the time their adversity or discrimination had to do with being the first or only woman in their class, squadron, or school, being excluded, and being treated as outsiders. Although the discrimination was not reflective of their entire career, the stories related some painful memories that the interviewees felt probably would contribute to their decision to leave the Navy.

**2. Justification**

The female naval aviators/NFOs interviewed were some of the very first women to be in the once all-male-dominated profession of sea-going aviation immediately following the repeal of the combat exclusion law. Some of the women felt that they were able to fit in, but others were not so lucky. In most of the cases, the alleged discriminator was senior to the interviewee. Further, the women claimed that their peers were not always willing to stand up for “what was right.”

Lieutenant Commander (N) said that being the only woman in her squadron was the most difficult part of her career:

That was my first squadron, I was so happy to be there, I was more motivated than anyone probably and it was difficult. It was a difficult time. That was the hardest part of my whole career I think. There were a lot of people there who didn't want women there and some of them even told me to my face, some of them in leadership positions. And people



telling me that they don't want women around and then they try to explain to me why. I was the first and only woman pilot there. We had an admin officer and an intelligence officer but they're in a different world. They're not aviators and actually I think that most of them appreciated having an admin officer around so they don't have to be the admin officer. But that was the hardest thing. There was a lot of back-stabbing going on, a lot of things I didn't even know were happening until much later in retrospect.

Lieutenant (S) said that she never felt as though she truly fit in, and she does not know if any woman ever can:

Although I feel part of the squadron, I don't know that I truly fit in. I'm not sure any woman can upon reflection. Initially I got to the squadron and ran into a group of people who, although it was nothing they did specifically, or a specific instance to really affect me, it was just a group of people who seemed to not want me there. I was the first female to get there and they just never gave me the benefit of the doubt. I was always doing something wrong. They would always come talk to me, and of course landing on the boat didn't help cause I wasn't doing very well and I got really bitter. I've never had any ill feeling towards anyone in my entire life but these people I just couldn't stand to be around and so, just because I don't know how to deal with somebody who won't at least give me a chance, I didn't do anything except show up. That's really how I felt. I don't know if that's valid or not but I think talking to people since, I think they knew that these guys were giving me a hard time but it wasn't anything overt or whatever, it was just kind of subtle stuff but that made it real tough and I think I'm a little bitter because of it.

Lieutenant (E) said that she had a chief who thought she needed to be taken care of, and it really bothered her:

Going back to my first cruise, I'd done a full set of work-ups and I was half way through my first cruise so I knew how to walk up on a flight deck. Yes, it's a very dangerous place, but I think I'm very careful when I walk up there and one time when our crew walked up there, I think they moved the aircraft. We had already walked on the jet and they had moved the aircraft and I can't remember what happened now, but, I think as they were moving it, I was starting to get out of the way and my chief yanked me and I'm like, what are you doing? I can see them moving it, I am moving but he was so concerned about me. I talked to him later about it. I confronted him because it bothered me because I am not a little girl, I am an officer, I know how to get around on the flight deck. If I'm about ready

to walk into a propeller, please grab me but there was nothing crucial that I was going to walk into and I can't remember the exact circumstance but it infuriated me because he was treating me like a kid basically, and not an officer... It made me mad and I told him about it and he said, "Yah, I'll try to treat you like the other officers."

Lieutenant (F) said that her biggest observation in the Navy was that all of the "old- school skippers" have problems with women:

That's my biggest observation in the Navy, that all the old school skippers, they're the ones that have the problem with women. It's not the people who have gone through training with us. Anyone around my age or my generation and younger, I got along with great. Anybody that was in the Navy before women started going through flight school and actually saw that we were getting better grades than they were at times or had the same kinds of problems that they had when they went through and we accomplished the same hurdles. You don't have the problems with them, it's the people that are your COs and some of the O-4s.

Lieutenant (G) said she was really glad to get Hornets, but the RAG wasn't a good experience for her:

I was fortunate, I had made the F-18 cut so I was able to get Hornets, and I was really ecstatic. That was a really hard time when I was there. When I had first checked in, it was about a year after Tailhook and unfortunately I think, because of that, there were a couple of instructors that were being investigated for Tailhook and there was some fear and anti-female sentiment in the squadron. When I had my first flight, I walked in and the bulletin board in the Ready Room had this article on it. It was put up page by page and it almost covered the whole board about why women should not be flying a tactical jet. At the time, I was the only female student pilot there, actually I was the only female there. There were no female instructors so it was a really bad situation and I just always felt like I was in a no-win situation there. I couldn't do anything right and it was really, really tough. Fortunately, I was able to finish and got out by the skin of my teeth.

Lieutenant (H) said that she was usually able to win everybody over, but in her last squadron that was not the case:

It always changes because you walk in and it's a hostile environment and then by the time you leave generally, I've won everybody over. The only exception to that would be in my last squadron. My CO and XO still had very set views about women and what women should be doing and I never got through to them. You can even see it on my fitrep. My first squadron, they were really awesome, they were like join the admin, they were really good about that. My second squadron, I think the direction came more from the CO and XO but I wasn't allowed to join the admin. My peers even went to bat to get me to join but the CO said it didn't look right.

Lieutenant (K) said that some of the comments that she heard were out of place:

When I was a student going through, there was a lot of pressure put on me always from the Marines instructors, never from the Navy guys. The Navy guys were great but I used to dread the Marines. I had one instructor who said so, how do you feel about women being in the Navy? I said, I think it's a great opportunity and he said, I don't, I think it's the biggest waste of money that they just flushed down the toilet. And of course, this is the guy that I'm about to go flying with and to know that that's his opinion of women in the military, you know he's already biased against you. Another Marine was just making comments that he shouldn't have been..., you know, "What the fuck are you doing, I should be at home fucking my wife instead of fucking around with you up here." Comments like that. Back then, you didn't complain, mum's the word. You didn't say anything because the few women that said something, like one of my best friends got called a cunt in the cockpit and she complained and all the other instructors just drove her out and started giving her really shitty grades and she got kicked out. In fact, when I was in the training command, there were about eight women that were right with me that were all my friends and were in my year group and every single one of them got attrited except for me, which was a significantly higher percentage of females getting attrited than males. There was a definite bias against the females just from the instructor perspective. They didn't want women flying, they didn't want anything to do with them and remember, at that time, the only people that were instructors had never flown with women and they damn well didn't want any women in their last male bastion, so in their view, we were intruders.



Lieutenant (R) said that it is an ongoing battle:

Instructors I've seen, the one guy would say, I've got a dirty joke to tell, and ask me and other women in the class by name if we were offended? Technically, I mean pointing us out of the whole class, I said I'm offended that you asked me and asked me by name whether or not I'm offended vice anyone. And he honestly said, "well you have to ask these things nowadays." No, you need to ask the whole class. There was a preacher, I mean our next preacher and he could have been offended but he's not going to say anything because you're splitting us off and it's still happening and it's happening everywhere. They feel they have to protect themselves and yah, they do, but he honestly didn't see what he was doing wrong because he did it twice to me because he had me in two classes. It's like, do you not get this? And they don't. They do not understand. It's still a battle.

Lieutenant (U) said she was the first in her squadron and there was some resistance:

It was just like all women who were the first, there was some resistance. We had a few pilots who would tell us the usual. You have to fly twice as good to be thought of as half as good. For instance, my first detachment, we went down to Florida, down to Miami, Homestead and I was one of the more senior lieutenants and I had one of the vans and we weren't there ten minutes and I got a call that said, hey can we borrow your van and I said sure where you going? They said it doesn't really matter and I said yes it does if you're gonna take my van. And he said, well, the skipper just called and we're all going out to Solid Gold, which were strip joints. So here I am, the only woman on the det and everybody goes with the CO to the strip joints. There were some roads to cross.

Lieutenant Commander (M) remembered an experience that would definitely be considered sexual harassment:

There's one huge sexual harassment I experienced in flight school. One of my instructors called me into his office one day when I was studying and I was in a flight suit and he told me to sit down. He said that I shouldn't walk fast in a flight suit and I said well why? And he said when a woman walks fast in a flight suit, she looks like a man. And I said I should take time to slow down and wiggle when I walk, ha, ha, ha, and he was like ha, ha, ha, and then he started going yah, you need to get your flight suits tailored so they're a little more fitting in the chest and you need to learn to



put your hair up with one pin so when you go in to see the CO you can just pop that one pin and let your hair cascade down. I'm sitting there totally uncomfortable but I was just a little Ensign, I didn't know. That was before sexual harassment, I didn't know. And then he tells me oh yah, we can go on a cross-country together and we can join the mile high club. I said, well what's the mile high club and he just kind of laughed like you don't know? I wasn't laughing and he said, you really don't know and I'm like no, I really don't know and he said, when you have sexual relations one mile up in the sky, some people just say it's a blow job some people say its sexual relations. At that point, I remember I stood up and I said, I just can't talk about that sir, and I walked out. I said something and left. When it came time to do a cross country, I made sure I went with some other instructor.

#### **N. THEME XIII: MOST INTERVIEWEES PLANNED TO LEAVE THE NAVY AFTER THEIR INITIAL OBLIGATION**

All of the women interviewed were asked whether they had decided to stay in the Navy or to get out. Of the 21 interviewed, 19 planned to leave, one was undecided, and the last planned to stay in the Navy. The researcher also asked the women what some of the factors were that were affecting their decision to stay in or get, out and the two main factors were family reasons and quality of life reasons.

##### **1. Interviewees are getting out because of family issues**

When asked what factors affected their decision to get out of the Navy, 17 of the 19 women who planned to leave named family issues as one of the most important factors. In fact, many of the interviewees felt that it was just too hard to have both a family and a career in the Navy.

Lieutenant (D) said she was getting out because she's tired of being separated from her husband and the Navy refuses co-locate them:

My personal life, being on shore duty and not being able to be with my husband. Then looking down the road and looking at one or both of us being at sea for our next tour and then if I end up going on a shore tour cause he's at sea it's just a lifetime of being separated. I want to have kids. I grew up with a single mom who had to raise three of us by herself and I don't begrudge anything that she did. She did what she had to do but I want better for my kids. I don't want to be like that. Now granted if something happens to my husband, God forbid, and I'm forced into that situation, then yah, I'll handle it. If it's my choice, I want to be able to do better than that. Looking at my friend who is a Navy pilot and married to a guy in the Air Force, they allowed him to leave a job so that he could live with his wife. Whereas the Navy, we work for the same service and they won't even put us together and they're just like, needs of the Navy. They won't even talk to you about it. You can't even get into some sort of dialogue where you can say, this would be good for you too and you can actually have some sort of convincing argument. They won't even talk to you about it. It's just like the door's just slammed in your face and that's it. I understand the manning problems but I didn't create them and the thing is, they created the manning problems by doing Reduction in Forces and getting rid of all the USNR people. They did try to do a short term fix and now they're paying the price for it but really they're not. We are and I've done my job, I stayed in, I didn't get kicked out, why should I have to pay the price if you guys are undermanned? That's not my fault, I'm doing the job I'm supposed to do. That's the kind of stuff that just makes me mad and they will not work with you. I mean you hear it time and time again. I talked to my detailer to tell him that the reason I wanted to live with my husband is because we want to have kids. Everyone's like, just get pregnant and I'm like, well here's the thing guys, how can I do that, that is so risky because what if they're so damn undermanned up here that they won't let me live with him? Who's to say they're gonna let me go live with him even with a kid? Then what will happen is I'll be a single mother for two years, trying to be a flight instructor, living in my little one bedroom apartment with a child. I can't risk that. I'd like to have some guarantees that they'll move me. I can't even risk that, plus, not to mention the fact that I'd like to live with my husband for even six months before we bring a child into it. But if I want to live with him, I have no choice, that's what I would have to do. I can't believe that I, a professional Naval Officer for the last nine years is even considering getting knocked up to get something that I want. I can't, that's something that an airman has to do. It just blows my mind.

Lieutenant (E) said her biggest factor for wanting to get out is that she set a goal, she reached it, and now her “clock is ticking” and she wants to have a lot of time to take care of her kids:

The biggest factor is, the clocks ticking and I’m not getting any younger. I want to have kids and I’m thirty-two years old and I want to be able to have a lot of time taking care of kids. I’m not sure exactly what I’m going to do afterwards, I’m not sure. I know I’m going to have to do something, but I want to have the option of being able to stay home with my kids for the first couple of years. Ten years ago I was not saying this, ten years ago, I was like no way, but at least for the Navy, I set a goal, I’ve reached it, I’ve surpassed what I thought I was gonna do, and so I’m to the point now where I’m ready to settle down a little bit and have kids. That, and I’ve spent a year and six months at sea, it’s not the funnest. In some respects I don’t mind it, most other respects, I’d rather be on the beach.

Lieutenant (F) said the reason she planned to leave is because she can’t imagine being separated from her husband and she is not willing to sacrifice that for her country or the military anymore:

Mostly, like 99% is family cause I’m tired of being separated and it was so hard doing it the first time and that was before we ever even got married, before we were even living together. There’s no way I can do it where now we’ve been together and separate cause it would just kill us. My priorities have changed and I’m not willing to sacrifice that for my country or the military. I feel like I’ve done more than 99% of the American population for my country. I shouldn’t have to feel guilty about it, even though I still do.

Lieutenant (H) said she would like to get out and start a family someday because when she’s 80 she will have a family but she will not have an aircraft:

If I stay in, transition, sea time and all that, I’m about to turn 30. So let’s say I took a transition, going through the RAG for a year or so, going back out to sea, probably spending three, at least three years at sea, and now I’m getting to be 35, 36ish. At some point along the line I’d like to have a family. If I don’t even start thinking about it by my thirties, that severely limits a lot of stuff. I’m not saying that I should get special treatment or anything like that, there’s a way around it. I haven’t spent a whole lot of



time thinking about it cause I've already made up my mind what I'm gonna do but that's important. You'll have family when you're 80, you're not gonna have an aircraft when you're 80. The guy I'm seeing right now is military. I've tried dating civilians and it's very funny because they don't understand that 90% of the Navy is male and they just really have a hard time dealing with that. And the fact too, I think it's pretty intimidating to be, you know dating a Naval Aviator. That's a lot to deal with.

Lieutenant (K) said she cannot keep on the career path if she wants to be an aviator and have kids, it's too hard to be a military member married to another military member, she is fed up with the lack of money for parts and training, and she thinks the leadership has gone downhill:

You can't keep on that career path if you want to have kids and be an aviator. And oh, by the way, they don't like pregnant women in their aviation squadrons. So, if you get pregnant in a fleet squadron, you're done for because you're not gonna get good fit-reps. The only time really to have any kids if you're gonna do it is on your shore tour and I wasn't married at that time so I took a flying billet. So, that's one big thing. Another big thing is I'm married to another military and both of us deploy. We wanted to get follow on orders where I would go and then he would go and keep this sea/shore split and they said no way, you both have to be sea-going at the same time which is an illegal order but that's what they have us slated for when the board came out. So, our very next tour of duty, we both would be leaving in November to be detachment officers in charge of deploying detachments. The detailer said, well, they'll just have to work with you. Well, how much is the skipper really gonna work with both of us now? You've just hurt both of your chances to progress. Three, the money. The situation is bad in terms of the spending they're doing right now. I think they're just cutting everybody so short that nobody can function anymore. And four, the leadership really has gotten bad, I think within the last 5 year period. They play too much to the press, they don't make a decision and stand by it. All the leadership ethics that you've grown to live by are now being destroyed by people constantly changing their minds and then blaming somebody else for their decisions. I don't like it.



Lieutenant Commander (M) said she planned to get out because she'd like to have kids some day:

Some day, I think I'd like to have kids and if I stay in, when am I gonna have kids? And I don't want to go away and leave them for six months, I don't know. I just don't think it's worth it to miss six months out of my baby's life. I guess that's the same thing, not wanting to spend five or six years of the last eight years at sea doing an unrewarding job and missing my kids' lives and move from where I'm living. I don't want to move.

Lieutenant (R) said she doesn't want to die an "old maid:"

I don't wanna die an old maid, A and B, it's kind of hard to carry on a relationship with someone whose not in the Navy. I'm getting to the point where my biological clock is a factor. I'm still a woman and I'd like to have kids and settle down and have a house and a white picket fence, and I've spent too many years denying that I wanted those things and now it might be to late. Even now it might be too late. And if that's the case then I'll accept it and I'll either be an old maid or married with a bazillion animals and that's just gonna have to satisfy my desire as far as motherhood and whatnot. But you know, I'll just take that as it comes I guess. Before the exclusion law was lifted I was just like oh, good, I'll just get out now and have kids and be a mom and do that whole thing and then it was like oh my God, look what I can do. And I went and I did it and I'm still doing it but at the back of my mind is still that niggling, what if doing this I've given up that whole nurturing side? And definitely, definitely, that nurturing side has been squashed. Look at what I do for a living. And I just don't wanna lose that if I don't have to.

## **2. Interviewees are getting out because of quality of life issues**

Eleven of the 19 women who planned to leave the Navy claimed that quality of life issues were a major factor.

Lieutenant (C) said she plans to leave because she is tired of doing more with less and she sees no fun ahead of her:

I guess the deterioration of the Navy in a way. We continue to do more with less and no one ever really wants to come up and say, we just can't do it anymore. No one ever really wants to raise their hand, confess, and say uncle, we can't do anymore. I see that continuing and continuing.

Even here, we've lost two officers and we're about to lose another one and there's no replacements in sight. In this job it's not such a big deal, it's not like I'm killing myself here but still you wonder where the replacements are, there aren't any. Being a department head definitely has no appeal at all because I've looked at my department heads, I've seen some good ones and some bad ones but after your JO tour, that's where you have all the fun and then you become a department head and that's when you have just that much more pressure and not getting paid that much more. By that time you're busy trying to placate the XO and CO, at least it seems like that's what they spend all their time doing. It's just not what I wanna do. I thought about the bonus that they offered. Well, I'm within like the six month window. If I took it, I found out from my detailer that I would owe them, I'd have to take my next set of orders for at least a year. So, I'd have to do at least another year of being out at sea and I was thinking okay, how much was it, \$24,000 or something? It wasn't worth it. Just thinking of living on the ship for one year, it's just not worth it. It's not worth that money, It's not worth anything cause it just has no appeal whatsoever. Like I said, there's nothing coming up for me that holds any appeal. There's nothing that could really hold me in the Navy.

Lieutenant (H) said she planned to leave because she's tired of having to regulate her personal life when the guys do not have to:

You can just lump it into quality of life. Other stuff, just tired of carrying the load. I am really tired of signing pieces of paper, saying how I will regulate my personal life in addition to my professional life. When I see guys that don't have to sign pieces of paper. Again, remember the vice of the community, I signed a piece of paper saying I will not have relations with anyone in the military, we're not just talking like sexual relations, we're talking dating. You heard about the mandatory pregnancy testing we got on cruise? We pulled out of port and had a mandatory pregnancy test. Well, I remember getting ready to put on my uniform to go stand before the skipper to explain my problems. I'm just tired of stuff like that, it's blown out of proportion.

Lieutenant (K) said that, even though she loves what she's doing, it is not worth dying for:

Nope, you know, I love what I do and I thought that I was really good at it too but it's not worth dying for. And it especially isn't worth dying for when there's nobody shooting at you. It's not worth dying for because

you don't have the two hundred dollars to put the new rings, solenoids in, that's not worth dying for. Maybe that's where that sense of patriotism has completely and totally evaporated. I don't feel that they're looking out for our best interests anymore. I think it's a sense of maturation, I mean to some degree, you say, has the Navy really changed that much or do you just reach a level that is a natural progression where you naturally become mature. Like I said, I had a ball, young, single, visiting all those ports, going out, it is like a college atmosphere. Where else do you get all these people, they're smart, they're bright, they're fun, I mean think about the group of people that you live and work with everyday, your peers, you have such a high quality cut and that's what makes it so fun and then you just reach a point where you naturally end up more towards a family situation. You're right, that stuff isn't so important anymore so to a certain degree, you've got to balance both of them but a child, having kids, that definitely is a big change because all of a sudden, it's not so fun for me to go TAD for two weeks to Jacksonville, which I would have jumped at two years ago. I don't blame the Navy for that at all. I don't blame the Navy for the couple child issues because you go into something and you know what the deployment schedule is like but I've done my duty, I've done everything they wanted me to do, I've served them well, they better not dare turn down my resignation now. You should never be forced to stay in a situation. I look around now and all of the quality people are gone and the people that are staying in are not. I don't know, there's a problem and I sort of feel like jeez, I feel like I can't get a job anyplace else. My obligation was to that seven year point and after that, sorry buddy, all bets are off. I don't feel that I owe it to the Navy to stay, God no, cause you know, the Navy will take, take, take everything they can but, they're not very willing to give in return.

Lieutenant Commander (N) said she is tired of being the first, it is time to let someone else do it, and she is tired of the poor quality of life on board the ship:

No, like I said, I didn't want to be the first woman department head. I don't want it. Let somebody else do it. See, I'm just burnt out on the whole thing. I'm so sick of it all. I am tired, I'm burned out on all the being a woman. I mean it's the woman thing. I'm tired of nothing being done about it. Simple fixes, things that could be fixed without a lot of cost. Like on the ship, the quality of life on the ship, you know, why don't we have no wax floors on the ship. I mean, that's just stupid to me. I know that sounds trivial but it's little things like that that could be fixed that aren't that irritate me. The quality of life is low in that area. Fluorescent lighting, why do we always have fluorescent lighting everywhere. It really does drain you or it does something to you that I've



read some articles but fluorescent light is not good for you. The air you breathe on the ship is bad, let's see, being the first woman department head, I think there would be a lot of undermining my authority and I don't want to go into that. I've already been there, done that, and I'm already burnt out on that kind of thing. Let one of these other women do it who went straight from getting winged to wherever they went and then to the fleet because they haven't experienced it yet. So, let them be the first to do that. I've already been the first enough thank you very much. I'm tired of it.

Lieutenant (S) said that the fleet just was not all that she thought it would be:

I think when I got to the fleet it probably wasn't all that I had expected or hoped for. It's certainly not all glamour and Top Gun. It's damn hard work, cruise is pretty tough and very lonely and that kind of thing. Based on that experience and plus the decision that yes, I do wanna eventually have a family, and that I somewhere along the way, I lost the desire to be an astronaut, so combine all of those and I just think I'll probably get out as soon as possible.

Lieutenant (T) said she is sick of not having control over her life:

I'd have to say family and just freedom I guess. I'm just really sick of not having control over my life and it's not worth it to me. I've done the fun stuff. Everything from here as far as I see is down hill. It's not worth it. I don't want to be a department head. They have no power and they do all the work and don't have any of the fun and I'm not interested in that. I've never been very motivated to be a commanding officer. To me that doesn't seem fun. You have no power and you just get shit on all the time so, I don't think you can make that much of a difference as a commanding officer.

**O. THEME XIV: MOST INTERVIEWEES FELT THAT THEIR DECISION TO LEAVE THE NAVY WAS FINAL**

**1. Theme**

Even though the Navy has been trying to keep people in service by offering aviation bonuses, most of the women interviewed who said that they were getting out also said that a bonus would not keep them in. In fact, 15 of the 21 women who claimed



to be leaving said there was absolutely nothing the Navy could do to make them stay. On the other hand, they felt that the Navy could make some positive changes to make future aviators want to stay.

## **2. Justification**

Lieutenant (B) said there is really nothing that would make her stay in the Navy:

To be honest, I don't think flying jets is gonna really do it for me. I'm flying a jet right now and if they said, you can go fly Hornets tomorrow, I know what it would entail. I'd still have to go on cruise, I'd still have to be away from my husband, I'd still have to live on a ship with 6,000 sailors. I've done that. I don't need to do it again. I want to go travel to Europe on my own. I can't say that I wouldn't do it, or even a job like flying CODs or something, I think that would be really interesting, but I don't think that that would be a sure thing to keep me around and I understand that. It's just inherent in the way the Navy has to do business. So, I definitely don't hold it against them. I think it's like I said, more just because I really want to pursue some other things and they can't offer me what I want to pursue. They could pay for my vet school I guess but that would be about it.

Lieutenant (C) said that there is not much the Navy could do to make her stay at this point because there is nothing to look forward to:

Diplomatically again, I think a lot of it would have to do with what the climate is like when I do decide to give my letter of resignation. As far as what the job market is like, I guess if the job market was terrible and I feel that I didn't really have a chance of getting a job or that it would be something that would pay a lot less or would not be very satisfying, then I might be tempted to stay in but that's a real long-shot. I think I could probably make something work. So I don't think that there's anything that the Navy can do that would encourage me to stay or, make me stay in because like I said, I know where I'm going next. I know what my next assignment would be and I just don't think I can do it. I would be so unhappy. I would be really so unhappy. So, unless all of a sudden they grant me great orders to some embassy somewhere or something like that, it might be different but you know, I don't think so.

Lieutenant (E) said that it would just be too hard to stay in because her husband is going to be a department and she wants to have kids:

It's really difficult especially with my husband being a department head here in the next ten months so I think that the biggest thing is going out to sea and having you know a three month old kid and going to sea. I'm not gonna do it, I'm not gonna do it.

Lieutenant (F) said it is impossible for the military to make her family happy because she and her husband are both aviators:

It's kind of hard for me personally just because it would almost be impossible for the military to make my family happy because I'm married to an Air Force pilot and there's no bases anymore. There's just not enough jobs for two career oriented people to stay in the military especially when they're in different services. Or even both aviators cause how many bases are going to have two different types of aircraft. So, I've heard of people doing it, you know pilot and school teacher or nurse or pilot and doctor whatever, but not two aviators, it's very hard.

Lieutenant (G) said nothing will make her stay because she can't trust the Navy anymore:

I really cannot think of anything that would make me stay in just because I remember thinking, if could get the Navy to let me go to graduate school for two years, and pay for it and then come back to the fleet would I stay in? I thought about that, and then this thing happened with them wanting me to stay an extra year and I said, you know what, I can't because I can't trust them to hold up their end of the bargain. I just am really getting tired of giving up all the control over my life. There's really nothing they can do to make me stay.

Lieutenant Commander (N) said the leadership would have to change to make her want to stay:

If they would do something, I don't know what they could do to make it clear that women are acceptable, not only acceptable but that they're necessary. They come out and do a lot of lip service to that but it's like they don't really mean it. Maybe bring more women in. I don't know what they could do. They probably couldn't do anything. They'd have to

make a lot of changes. I'm at the point now and I'm so far beyond even considering staying in that it would be hard to come up with something. Maybe if they let me go exactly where I wanted to go and I could pick the leader, then I would do it. Cause you risk a lot, I mean I wouldn't want to be stuck in another squadron with a skipper like my last one, there's no way. And that's one of the reasons too, the leadership. You get some good, you get some bad and I don't want to be in the bad leadership situation as a department head.

Lieutenant (P) said that there is nothing that the Navy can do for her today, but that the Navy needs to start working on helping the people who are starting their fleet tour now:

The Navy needs to work today on helping the people who are starting their first fleet tour so that they'll stay. They can't do anything for me today. They need to fix the problem for the future cause it's a problem. And I don't know what they can do to fix it. I mean people have been doing this for years in the Navy, years and years and years, way before I got involved in this company so I don't know. They need to improve officer quality of life, not just officers, that sounded awful, everybody in the Navy, the quality of life needs to be improved. I mean morale, everything, MWR, it's just not enough to make people stay on. I think enlisted are more lured by the security. I mean security's a big issue. You've got a job here in the Navy but if you have skills that are good in the outside world they're probably gonna jump ship. No, they can't do anything for me, no bonus is gonna fix it, I don't know. I think primarily a lot of people are getting out because of deployments. Some of them are getting out maybe because of money attractions or at least for part of that factors in there somehow as a tiny, tiny bit. Money by itself is not it. But deployments, I think night traps and deployments for pilots especially. That's what it all boils down to. One of my skippers always said, yep, people are getting out, night traps and family separation, that's what it always is. And it really is, nothings changed and that was years ago. Four or five years ago. Now I think people are just getting out so much more.

Lieutenant (U) said the Navy would have to change its structure too much to make her stay:

Not really, because they can't change their structure enough that it makes it easy for us. I mean the deployments are too long for family, especially when you have dual service members and I'm not willing to name a

guardian for my child if my husband and I both have to deploy. I think it's one of those situations where you know you feel like if you can't give it all, you don't wanna give it any. And so, I really don't, unless they make some kind of consideration, I know they try to locate you in the same place but that doesn't always work, obviously it can't for some couples but I just think the nature of how it's set up does not make it easy for dual service family members. I think that's more as a female aviator than as a female officer.



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## **V. SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **A. SUMMARY**

This study concentrates on the experiences and attitudes of female naval aviators/NFOs and the reasons why they stay in the Navy or leave after their initial service obligation. As the study shows, factors that affect a stay-or-leave decision are many and vary from one interviewee to the next. Some of the most common reasons for leaving the Navy relate to family concerns, quality of life issues, husband's career, leadership, doing more with less, and "political correctness." Many of the reasons for leaving are similar to those found in a recent COMNAVAIRPAC survey. (Aviation Officer Community Manager)

The majority of women interviewed for the study have concerns that are likely shared by their male counterparts, but some differences are worthy of note. For instance, most of the women felt that they had to perform better than their male counterparts just to seem "half as good": they felt pressured to stand as a role model for other women; and they felt uneasy about having children and starting a family during the normal aviation progression.

Further, the interviewees said that they had to cope with the following: (1) negative stereotypes about their abilities; (2) being the "first" or "only" female in a job setting; (3) being given typically "female" or non-competitive jobs; (4) feeling compelled to "fit in"; and (5) feeling discriminated against because of their gender. In

fact, a significant number of interviewees felt that these circumstances were the source of their most stressful times in the Navy.

Many of the interviewees felt that restrictions in the career path of an aviator limit the ability of a woman to have both children and a successful career, or for both men and women to obtain higher education. These perceptions may relate to a feeling throughout the aviation culture that members cannot be out of the cockpit for any amount of time without jeopardizing their career. (Appendix G shows the normal aviation officer career path.)

The 21 female naval aviators/NFOs interviewed gave detailed accounts of their experiences, perspectives, and career intentions. These interviews produced 14 major themes that describe how female naval aviators/NFOs view their careers in the Navy and what factors may influence their decision to stay in the Navy or get out. These themes are as follows:

Theme I: Most interviewees were influenced by a family member to join the military

Theme II: Family and friends were generally supportive of the interviewee's decision to join the military

Theme III: Most interviewees chose aviation for the fun, excitement, and a challenge

Theme IV: Most interviewees said their commitment to the Navy is to serve their country

Theme V: Most interviewees said their commitment to the Navy has lessened over the years

Theme VI: Most interviewees felt satisfied with the return on their commitment to the Navy

Theme VII: Most interviewees felt that the conditions of service have changed for the worse over the past few years

Theme VIII: A number of interviewees felt that they had “typically-female” or non-competitive jobs throughout their career

Theme IX: Most interviewees felt that they had no positive female role models

Theme X: The peak career experiences of most interviewees involve an accomplishment or achievement

Theme XI: Most interviewees felt that the most stressful times in their careers involved gender issues, quality of life issues, or poor leadership

Theme XII: All interviewees had faced adversities or experienced discrimination in the Navy due to their gender

Theme XIII: Most interviewees planned to leave the Navy after their initial obligation

Theme XIV: Most interviewees felt that their decision to leave the Navy was final

## **B. CONCLUSIONS**

Perhaps the most surprising finding of the study was that 19 of the 21 women interviewed said they planned to leave the Navy. Even more significant was the fact that all 19 of those who planned to leave felt there was nothing the Navy could do to make them stay. Many of the interviewees felt that it was too late for the Navy to do anything to pull them back and that no cash bonus would ever change their decision. As Lee and Mitchell (1994) observe: “Over time, organizations invest substantial resources in their employees. The corresponding costs to the firm regarding employees’ quitting the organization and the subsequent hiring of replacement employees can be significant in terms of personal, work-unit, and organizational readjustments.” (p. 51) This is



especially pertinent to the Navy, which does not have lateral entry of its “employees.” When the Navy loses a seasoned aviator, it must inevitably “grow” a replacement over time. And experience and training in naval aviation are costly in terms of both readiness and money: it takes approximately \$2 – \$5.5 million to “grow” a new aviator over a span of three to four years.

Because personnel turnover is such an important issue for the Navy as well as other organizations, it has been the focus of much research. A number of studies have examined turnover as part of a “push vs. pull” theory of retention. Market-oriented researchers, for example, have studied a “pull” theory that they feel involves concepts external to the employee such as the supply and demand of labor, and focuses on job alternatives and how such alternatives surface. At the same time, the “push” theory has been studied by psychologically-oriented researchers and is thought to involve issues that are internal to the employee. Furthermore, the research that has been conducted around the “push” theory primarily addresses job-related perceptions and attitudes. (Lee and Mitchell, 1994)

In reviewing various models associated with the “push vs. pull” theory of employee turnover, Lee and Mitchell concluded in a 1994 article that employee turnover is a complex process whereby individuals assess their feelings, personal situation, and work environment and, over time, make decisions about staying or leaving an organization. Some of their major findings are as follows:

- 1) One of the major precipitating events for employee turnover is the shock to the system – an event that prompts an individual to evaluate his or her current and perhaps other jobs.      ) Shocks are not just negative job-related factors; positive and neutral events that are both job and non-job

related can prompt mental deliberations about leaving. 3) In some cases, employees simply leave because the shock results in scripted behavior, where no extensive cognitive deliberations that evaluated the current or alternative jobs take place. 4) Some employees leave organizations without considering alternatives; their central choice is to stay or leave their present company – not to quit for another organization. 5) In most cases, employees make decisions about staying with or leaving an organization based on a fit or compatibility criterion, rather than on maximizing their subjective expected utilities. 6) Employee turnover occurs over time; only by developing methods that assess how the process evolves will researchers and managers understand why individuals chose to leave. (p. 84-85)

Although much research has been conducted around the area of personnel turnover or retention, an exact method has not been developed for determining whether someone will choose to stay with an organization or leave. Therefore, even after many years of study, researchers and managers still cannot predict much better than by chance whether a particular employee will eventually quit. (Lee and Mitchell, 1994)

In relating this research to aviation retention, it is apparent from the present study that external factors and opportunities are “pulling” aviators/NFOs out of the Navy. These factors include a healthy economy and airlines that are hiring pilots. At the same time, certain negative attitudes and perceptions of the Navy regarding quality of life, family issues, operations tempo, leadership, and other elements of Navy life are also “pushing” aviators/NFOs out the door. Since the Navy cannot predict or change the economy or competing opportunities for its aviators/NFOs, it must obviously focus on the current attitudes and perceptions of aviators/NFOs, or the so-called “push” factors.

Another finding in this thesis indicates that many female naval aviators/NFOs struggle with the decision of whether to continue a career in naval aviation or resign due

to their desire to have a husband and children, since they feel it is too difficult to do both successfully. It is important to note here that almost all (11 of 12) married aviators/NFOs have a husband in the military. For these women, it is especially difficult to have children and coinciding assignments with their husbands. In fact, many of the interviewees believe that the Navy is unwilling to work with married service couples on orders at all. Further, the interviewees mentioned the fact that their biological "clock" was ticking, and that they would like to begin having children before it is "too late." In thinking about what lies ahead in their career, however, many of the interviewees did not see how they could possibly have both a family and a career in aviation. It should be noted that this may not be all that different from what women experience in a civilian career. Indeed, issues about the timing of parenthood complicate most women's career decisions, whether in the military or in the civilian sector.

Researchers have found that mothers may follow one of two patterns -- sequential or simultaneous -- in the timing of parenthood. A sequential pattern is when a woman pursues either a career or motherhood first; and a simultaneous pattern is when a woman has children and a career at the same time. Researchers have also found that 70 percent of mothers actually used one of three courses: (1) *motherhood follows employment*, the mother starts a career and then quits when she has her first child; (2) *employment brackets motherhood*, where the mother interrupts her career and spends full time at home with the children and then resumes her career after the children have grown; or (3) *employment follows motherhood*, where the mother completes her full-time parenting role before she begins her career. (Powell and Mainiero, 1993, p. 202-203)

The decisions women face about the timing of parenthood can have a profound effect on their lives due to the reality of the so-called biological clock. This issue contributes to a unique difference between men's and women's careers. Few men see marriage or family as competing with their career or on their career success. In fact, men may choose to accommodate competing priorities between work, family, and career decisions. Women, on the other hand, typically have no such choice: motherhood almost always leads to some type of accommodation in a woman's career, since women primarily handle the bulk of family responsibilities, even when both parents have a full-time job. (Powell and Mainiero, 1993, p. 203)

Furthermore, these multiple and conflicting role demands, combined with the stress of timing parenthood, often lead women to make significantly different career choices than do men. While the basic work motivation may be the same for both sexes, women tend to make different choices because their early socialization and later opportunities are different. Therefore, if women do not see the availability of child-care and they wish to have children, they may choose a career that will allow for greater flexibility so that they can meet the demands of both their career and their family. This reflects the relative complexity of the social context in which women live rather than a difference in work motivation between the sexes. (Powell and Mainiero, 1993, p. 203)

Women do not seem to have less work or career motivation than do men, but they may have a different perspective concerning what a career means. Women imagine a balance between work and relationships affecting their career decisions and choices. Because the structure may not facilitate women achieving the balance they seek,



however, many are required to make trade-offs between their husband's needs, family demands, and their own work motivation (Powell and Mainiero, 1993, p. 203)

The interviews also revealed that female naval aviators/NFOs have no positive female role models. This could be a problem because, without positive female role models, female naval aviators/NFOs do not have as much of an opportunity to be mentored as do men. According to Ragins (1989), women need mentors to understand the male-dominated business culture and to be identified for promotion. Further, in most reports, women are less likely than men to develop mentoring relationships. As a result, women turn to peers for social support, but not to the career-enhancing support of individuals in power. (Powell and Mainiero, 1993, p. 206-207)

Because of concerns about possible intimacy and sexual attraction, Clawson and Kram (1984), believe potential male mentors may be reluctant to select female protegees. Therefore, they instead prefer to groom and promote other men to leadership positions. They may also simply prefer to mentor people who are similar to themselves. These preferences of men to work with other men can present a major barrier to women's career success. (Powell and Mainiero, 1993, p. 207)

Some readers may question why the Navy should care that women are leaving the aviation field and the Navy altogether. Two areas of concern are the cost associated with training aviators and the benefits of having diversity within the military. Issues of readiness and the high cost of "growing" new aviators are discussed above. Equally important is the Navy's need to take full advantage of the talents of all persons who are capable, qualified, and willing to serve. A report entitled *Workforce 2000: Work and*

*Workers for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* estimates that, by the year 2000, the labor force will consist of 47 percent women, 25 percent minorities, and only 40 percent white, non-Hispanic men. (Powell, 1993, p. 226) Therefore, it is important for the Navy to continue its efforts to utilize the Nation's cultural diversity and create the most effective force possible from the population at hand.

As Powell, 1993 contends, "Women and people of color have higher turnover rates and often have lower job satisfaction levels than do white males. This reflects frustration over a lack of career success and discomfort with the dominant organizational culture." (p. 240) Further, he found that organizations with the best reputations for valuing diversity incorporate the needs and values of employees from all groups into the organizational culture; and it is these organizations that tend to have the lowest turnover rates.

In the present study, the women who planned to leave the Navy are not doing so because it "just got too hard,"; they are leaving because they do not feel that the military is worth the trouble anymore. In fact, most of the women interviewed are top performers among their peers and they are leaving just as top male performers are leaving, and for many of the same reasons. This could force the Navy to eventually dip lower into the pool of candidates for aviation; and this, in turn, could lead to lowering standards and promoting poorer performers. It is important, then, to pay close attention to the attitudes and perceptions of these interviewees to determine ways to create a more flexible Navy for the future.

## **C. RECOMMENDATIONS**

**1. The Navy needs to admit that there is still a problem with gender discrimination and confront it head on.**

Even though the Navy has come a long way in its efforts to eliminate sexual harassment and discrimination, the problems of sexism still exist throughout many of the aviation communities. In many cases, the alleged offenders were in leadership positions. The Navy should confront the issue head on and educate leadership that the very aspects that make men and women different also help to enrich and broaden the skills that will be necessary for future endeavors. Otherwise, sexism will fester and women will continue to be dissatisfied and leave.

**2. The Navy should set up a structured mentoring program for women.**

Since many of the women interviewed indicated that they had no female role models to look up to and, in many cases, they were the senior women, the issue of mentoring is an extremely difficult one for them. Until the Navy is able to promote and retain a substantial percentage of senior female officers in sea-going aviation, a structured mentoring program is needed for women.

Mentors play important development roles for individuals, as the following notes:

Mentors provide young adults with career-enhancing functions, such as sponsorship, coaching, facilitating exposure and visibility, and offering challenging work or protection, all of which help the younger person to establish a role in the organization, learn the ropes, and prepare for advancement. In the psychosocial sphere, the mentor offers role modeling, counseling, confirmation, and friendship, which help the young adult to develop a sense of professional identity and competence. (Powell and Mainiero, 1993, p. 206)

Women need mentors to help them deal with the conditions of service and to take full advantage of the opportunities available to them. Without improvements in the current system, the majority of women will probably never experience a positive mentoring relationship due to the lack of senior female leadership and apparent difficulties in establishing cross-gender mentoring.

**3. The Navy should be more flexible in the career path of an aviator to make it easier for women and men to have both a lasting military career and a family with children.**

Many of the women interviewed in the present study are leaving the Navy because they want to have children and they do not believe that they can do so while in service. Although some of the interviewees found the time to have children, these women say that it has not been easy and that they plan to resign from the Navy. Some of the issues involve child-care and the number of hours on duty, while other issues involve assignments coinciding with that of a military spouse and raising children. It is thus clear that the Navy may need to create a more flexible career path for both male and female officers in aviation to retain them for the future.

The Navy may wish to explore developing a program such as the Separation for Care of Newborn Children (CNC) run by the Coast Guard. The Coast Guard program allows officers and enlisted personnel, both male and female, a one-time separation from active duty for up to two years to care for newborn children. By providing the CNC option, the Coast Guard helps its members create a better balance between their careers and personal commitments and generally improve the quality of service life. The policy



provides for the discharge of a member with the guarantee of reenlistment or a new officer appointment as long as physical standards can be met. The policy was developed as a special retention program.

#### **D. AREAS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH**

Due to the relatively small sample of female aviators/NFOs interviewed in the study, the reader should not use the results to predict and generalize for all female aviators/NFOs in the Navy. The following are potential areas for further research.

##### **1. Conduct a survey that will include all female aviators/NFOs.**

Only 21 sea-going female naval aviators/NFOs were interviewed as part of the study. It would not be appropriate to draw conclusions about 220 sea-going female naval aviators/NFOs based on the attitudes and beliefs of such a small sample. However, this study could be used to develop a more extensive survey of all female naval aviators/NFOs.

##### **2. Conduct a study that will compare the factors affecting retention decisions of all sea-going aviators/NFOs in the Navy.**

The experiences and career plans of male sea-going naval aviators/NFOs are as important to understand as are those of female naval aviators/NFOs. It is recommended that a study of all aviators/NFOs be conducted. This study would ideally capture the feelings of men and women as a whole and address male-female differences and similarities with regard to retention.

**3. Conduct a survey of women in other naval communities to better understand their attitudes and perceptions.**

Since some of the research examined for this thesis pointed to retention problems in other communities, it is recommended that a study of women in other Navy occupations be conducted to see if the perceptions about quality of life, marriage, and family issues are the same. This study would ideally capture the attitudes and concerns of woman as a whole and address the differences and similarities of various communities with regard to retention.

**4. Conduct a similar study in five years to see if the perceptions and attitudes of female aviators/NFOs change and to identify trends in retention**

Since the women interviewed for this study were “pioneers” and little was known about them or their career experiences, it is recommended that the same study be conducted in another five years to see if the perceptions and attitudes of women change at all. In fact, since many of the concerns that women had in this study involved being the first or only women in their commands, it will be important to see if any progress toward diversity and gender equity is made over the next five years.

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**APPENDIX A: DATE OF INTERVIEWS BY INTERVIEWEE DESIGNATOR  
AND AVIATION COMMUNITY**

<b>DATE OF INTERVIEW</b>	<b>PILOT/NFO</b>	<b>AVIATION COMMUNITY</b>
08 JAN 99	PILOT	E-2C
20 JAN 99	NFO	S-3B
20 JAN99	NFO	S-3B
20 JAN 99	PILOT	S-3B
22 JAN 99	PILOT	H-46
22 JAN 99	PILOT	H-46
23 JAN 99	NFO	ES-3
08 FEB 99	NFO	S-3B
10 FEB 99	PILOT	H-46
11 FEB 99	PILOT	F-14
12 FEB 99	PILOT	MH-53
17 FEB 99	PILOT	ES-3
18 MAR 99	NFO	F-14
19 MAR 99	PILOT	F-18
19 MAR 99	PILOT	F-18
22 MAR 99	NFO	ES-3
22 MAR 99	PILOT	SH-60B
23 MAR 99	NFO	A6-E
23 MAR 99	NFO	EA-6B
24 MAR 99	PILOT	ES-3
24 MAR 99	PILOT	E-2C



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## APPENDIX B: SELECTED CHARACTERISTICS OF INTERVIEWEES

SELECTED CHARACTERISTICS	NUMBER
<b>RANK:</b>	
LT	19
LCDR	2
<b>MEDIAN YEARS OF INTERVIEWEE:</b>	31
<b>INTERVIEWEES WHO HAD MILITARY PARENTS:</b>	14
<b>PRIOR ENLISTED:</b>	2
<b>COMMISSIONING SOURCE:</b>	
AOCS	6
ROTC	5
SERVICE ACADEMY	10
<b>COLLEGE MAJOR:</b>	
TECHNICAL	14
NON-TECHNICAL	7
<b>MARITAL STATUS AT SERVICE ENTRY:</b>	
SINGLE	21
MARRIED	0
<b>MARITAL STATUS AT PRESENT:</b>	
SINGLE	8
MARRIED	12
DIVORCED	1
<b>WOMEN WITH CHILDREN:</b>	5
<b>NUMBER OF MILITARY SPOUSES:</b>	11

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## APPENDIX C: DEMOGRAPHIC WORKSHEET

Rank:            Age:

# Brothers:    # Sisters:

Birth order:

Brothers or sisters in military:

Parents military background:

College Major:

Source of commissioning:

Year commissioned:

Former enlisted, if so, what service and for how many years:

Type aircraft:

Time remaining for initial obligation:

Marital status at service entry:

Number of children at service entry:

Marital status present:

Number of children at present:

Spouse in military:



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## APPENDIX D: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL/QUESTIONS

Thank you for agreeing to be interviewed. As you may recall from our previous conversation, this interview is designed to help me obtain information useful in completing my thesis for the Naval Postgraduate School. The topic of my thesis relates specifically to females in carrier aviation who have completed at least one operational deployment. As you know, women in aviation are a unique group that we know little about. We are just now starting to learn about the effects of policy changes that have allowed us to take more active roles including combat aviation. Throughout this interview, I would like to hear stories about your experiences as a naval aviator/NFO. I am specifically interested in finding out what factors or situations you have run into that may affect your decision to make the Navy a career or not. To understand those factors, I feel that it is necessary to spend some time finding out a little about your background and what led you to the military and to aviation specifically.

About 15-20 females from various sea-going aviation communities will be interviewed for my thesis. It is important for you to understand that nothing you say will be identified with you personally. I will be using a variety of the information that you give me to compare with others to see if possible trends or themes exist in the factors affecting your decisions to stay in the Navy or leave. And if so, I will be making possible recommendations to change some things that may be consistent throughout the interviews.

I would like to have your permission to tape record what you say so that I don't miss anything important. Remember that no statements will ever be attributed to you. All names, places, and other identifiers will be deleted. If you would like me to stop taping for any reason, please let me know. Otherwise, do you have any questions before we get started?

Great

1. Tell me about your decision to join the military? Navy? Aviation? Who influenced your decision? What were your other options?
2. Tell me about what your family and friends thought about your decision.
3. Tell me about your experiences at (USNA, ROTC, AOCS)?
4. Tell me about what your experiences in your past tours have been like.
5. Now tell me about a peak experience or high point in your career so far?
6. What have been the major stressors or low points for you in your career?
7. Where were you in your training track when the combat exclusion law was rescinded? Did this affect the type of aircraft you were assigned to?
8. What does your commitment to the Navy mean to you?
9. Do you feel that your commitment to the Navy or to your career as an aviator has changed at all since women have been allowed to serve in combat roles? If so, in what ways has it changed?
10. Do you feel in any way that you give more to the Navy than you get in return? Or that sometimes you are not able to give as much as you'd like?
11. Tell me about your relationships with past superiors, subordinates, peers, other female officers, and female spouses?
12. Tell me about the jobs that you have had in your past tours?

13. Based on your experience, have the conditions of service changed at all over the past few years-or since the time you first began your career in Naval aviation? If so, have they changed for the better or worse?
14. Do you feel as a female aviator that you have any positive female role models to look up who are successfully balancing a career and a family?
15. Have you thought about whether you are going to stay in the Navy or get out?
16. What are some of the factors that may effect your decision to stay or go?
17. If you decided to get out, what would have to happen to make you stay?
18. What could the Navy do differently to make you want to stay in?
19. If family is a big concern, what concerns do you have about balancing a family and a career in the Navy?
20. What could the Navy do to make it possible to do both?



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**APPENDIX E: DATE AND LOCATION OF INTERVIEWS BY NUMBER  
INTERVIEWED**

<b>DATE OF INTERVIEW</b>	<b>LOCATION</b>	<b>NUMBER INTERVIEWED</b>
08 JAN 99	WASHINGTON,DC	1
20 JAN 99	SAN DIEGO, CA	3
22 JAN 99	SAN DIEGO, CA	2
23 JAN 99	SAN DIEGO, CA	1
08 FEB 99	WASHINGTON, DC	1
10 FEB 99	NORFOLK,VA	1
11 FEB 99	OCEANA, VA	1
12 FEB 99	WASHINGTON, DC	1
17 FEB 99	WASHINGTON, DC	1
18 MAR 99	OCEANA, VA	1
19 MAR 99	JACKSONVILLE, FL	2
22 MAR 99	PENSACOLA, FL	2
23 MAR 99	PENSACOLA, FL	2
24 MAR 99	MERIDIAN, MS	2

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## APPENDIX F. DATA TEMPLATE

### PART A: DEMOGRAPHICS

Respondent #:

Rank:

Age:

# Brothers: # Sisters:

Birth Order:

Brothers or Sisters in Military:

Parents Military Background:

College Major:

Source of Commissioning:

Year Commissioned:

Enlisted Service:

Type Aircraft:

Initial Obligation Time Remaining:

Marital Status at Service Entry:

Number of Children at Service Entry:

Marital Status Present:

Number of Children Present:

Spouse in Military:

### PART B: RESPONSES

Reason for Entry:

Experiences at Commissioning Source:

Experiences in Past Tours:

Peak Experience in Career:

Lowest Point in Career:

Commitment to Navy:

Jobs Held in Past Tours:

Role Models:

Retention:

Factors Affecting Retention Decisions:

Gender and Career Choices:

Family Concerns:

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# APPENDIX G. AVIATION OFFICER CAREER PATH

CAPT 21Yrs +	Sequential Command	Senior Shore: DC Subspecialty Joint  Senior Service College  Major Shore Staff		
	CAG/Ship Command			Major Shore Command
CDR 15-21 Yrs	Ship Staff/Joint/ Washington/JPME	CV XO CVN XO	Sea Tour	
	Squadron CO			
	Squadron XO			
	Fleet Replacement Squadron (FRS)		- Screen - Screen - Screen	
	Second shore tour JPME/Joint/DC/Staff Subspecialty utilization Note: Both a squadron department head tour and a shore tour are done around this time. The important factor is to have a major Dept. Head fitness report in time for the command screen boards (indicated at right)			Third sea tour (30 months) Squadron Dept. Head
LT 4-10 Yrs	Second Sea Tour: (24 months exclusive of FRS if required) Ship Sea Staff/Squadron (7 Yr MSR)			
	First shore tour: (36 months) PG School/Staff/VT or FRS/TRACOM/Recruiting (6 Yr MSR)			
LTJG 2-4 Yrs	First squadron tour (36 months)			
ENS 0-2 Yrs	Fleet Replacement Squadron			
	Flight training			

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